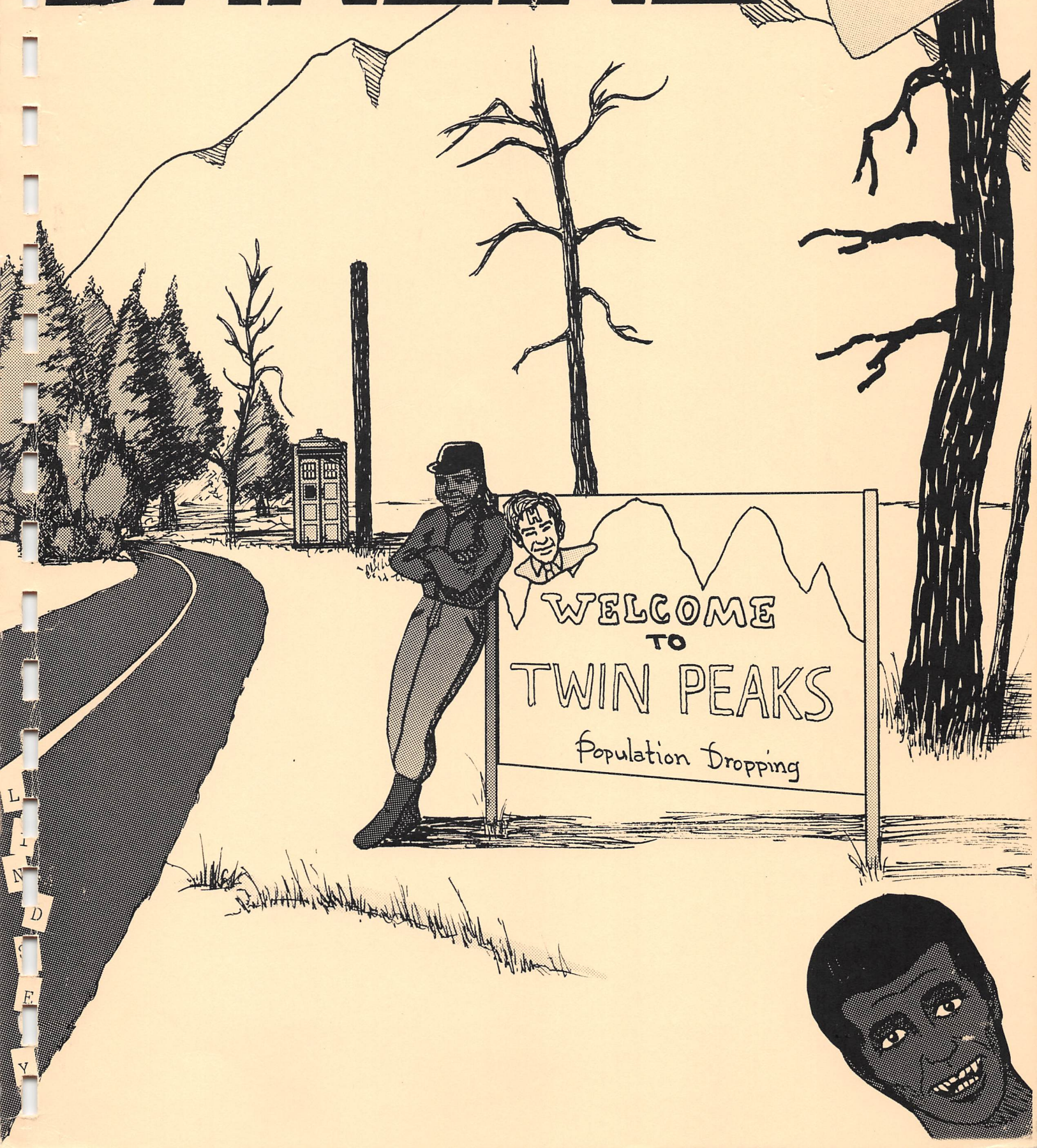
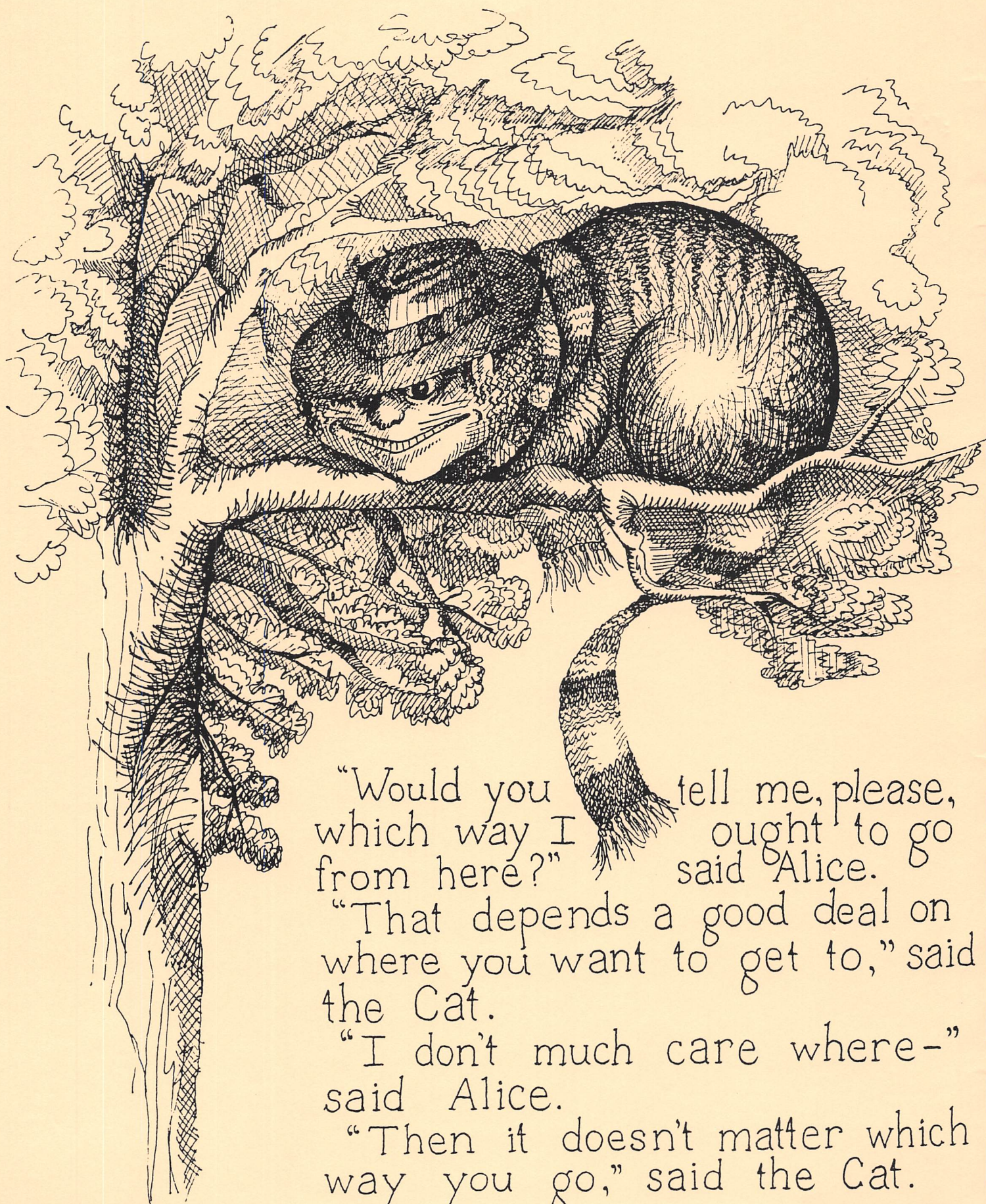


BANZINE 2



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"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" said Alice.

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where—" said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.



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DW Doctor Who B7 Blakes 7 RGB Real Ghostbusters KTD Kill The Dead QL Quantum Leap
RD Red Dwarf BB Buckaroo Banzai TNG Star Trek: Next Generation BA2 Blackadder II
ETC Multimedia

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Sandra Williams.....45,46,136(L),138,140,141(L),142(U),144(L),145(L)

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and MARY "Give me snuggles or die" MORRIS

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So what? Big deal.



THE INEVITABLE EDITOR'S PAGE(S)

Another year, another fanzine...

I apologize for the great deal of time it's taken to get BANZINE #2 out. A slow trickle of submissions, a decision to visit Florida instead of VISIONS 90 last November, and an unexpected visit to the hospital last January (fell on the ice and gave myself a good concussion, but not to worry--I'm every bit as nuts as I was before) all contributed to the delay. But frankly, I think this one's worth the wait.

I'm still using "Blake", my Smith-Corona PWP word processor. Blake only ate two disks this time around, neither of which held any of this issue's stories. I think he's waiting until he's sure he can REALLY cripple me. I'm using the "right justify" feature because I think it makes the layout look better (if a little odd at times), and the wonderful 15-pitch daisy wheel keeps the page count down somewhat.

And what a page count. This issue's crammed with stories, poems, and more art than I knew what to do with! Last December I sent out a status report to my tribbers, letting them know the deadlines for art--and three artists decided I didn't have enough material, so they sent more!

You will note that there is little to no BLAKES 7 material in here; I fear that this is probably a by-product of the sudden drop in fan interest. There isn't much BANZAI, either, a by-product of the lack of surging fan interest. Plus, I had one writer who had promised me a good vignette about the Cavaliers, then he decided he didn't want to that, because he was going to do an Indiana Jones/Banzai crossover, but after reading Mary Jean Holmes' BURNT OFFERINGS, decided he wasn't good enough to do that, so he gave me a realll bizarre crossover story and a revised copy of an older story. I don't know what I'm going to do with this Morris fella...

A few items of note: "Beyond Terminus", "Rebirth", "A Memory", and an early version of "The Substitutes" appeared in THE LIEUTENANT'S LOG, the late, lamented letterzine by Atlanta Lea, and appear with the blessing of Fandom's High Priestess. Mark Sellmeyer's "Next Generation" illo appeared in the DELTA GRADE NEWSLETTER and is used with their permission.

And then there is PAWS. This strip, by Connie Crouch and Leah McGrew, appeared in THE LIEUTENANT'S LOG and won an instant fan following. On the next page are two special strips that these talented ladies wanted me to give special attention to, and some of their favorites are scattered through the zine. Anybody who has ever owned a cat will fall in love with this stuff, believe me. I am honored to be able to bring PAWS to a new audience, and am positive that you'll flip for it.

Well, time for "thank yous". First off, to my tribbers: Tim Lindsey, Cathy Peters, Rebecca Ann Brothers (I'm in love with Kimri), Melody Rondeau, Larc Levy, Kathy Wesley, Emily Penfield, The Redhead, Pat Dunn, Diana Smith, Steven Veverka, Judi Boguslawski, Eric Hoffman, Julia Jay, Chris Cook, Kim Wigmore, Nora Mai (BIG thanks to you!), Cathy Boudreau, Helen Woolverton, Lisa Conner, Cheryl Duval, Melissa Mastoris, Roxie Ray, Laura Virgil, Sandra Williams, Mark Sellmeyer (I told you to go wild, and you didn't disappoint!), Kandi Goldsmith, Leah "Doctor" Rosenthal, Al Manachino, Kevin Duncan, Adrian Morgan, Rachel Kudishin, Lisa Savignano, Connie Crouch, Leah McGrew, and Liz "Apache" Sharpe.

To my large circle of friends who are always there when I need advice, encouragement, or a kick in the pants: Annie Wortham, Linda Terrell, Bruce Mai, Kevin Parker, Karen River (who let Mary and me invade her place last October), Linda & Keith Tomazi, Jean Lorrah, Atlanta Lea & the Low Temple, Sharyn Sobel, Pam Spurlock, Sandy Schreiber (is Nell a member of the ROTMC yet?), Anne Collins Smith, the UHSFC, and the Delta Grades.

And to the Redhead, my wife Mary, who has again put up with "April Zine Hysteria" with her usual patience and sense of humor. Eight years ago this October I saw her at a CIA meeting searching for a place to sit. We started talking and stopped long enough to get married in June of 1985, then took up where we left off. I don't know what she sees in me, but I am so glad she does.

This issue is affectionately dedicated to Liz Sharpe...just because.

That's it for me, in more ways than one. I am putting BANZINE and NAUGHTY BITS on indefinite hiatus, in order to spend more time writing. There will probably be other zines from BANDERSNATCH--novellas, compilations and the like--so I'm not getting completely away. But writing has always been what I've most enjoyed doing, and I firmly believe that one should always do what you most enjoy.

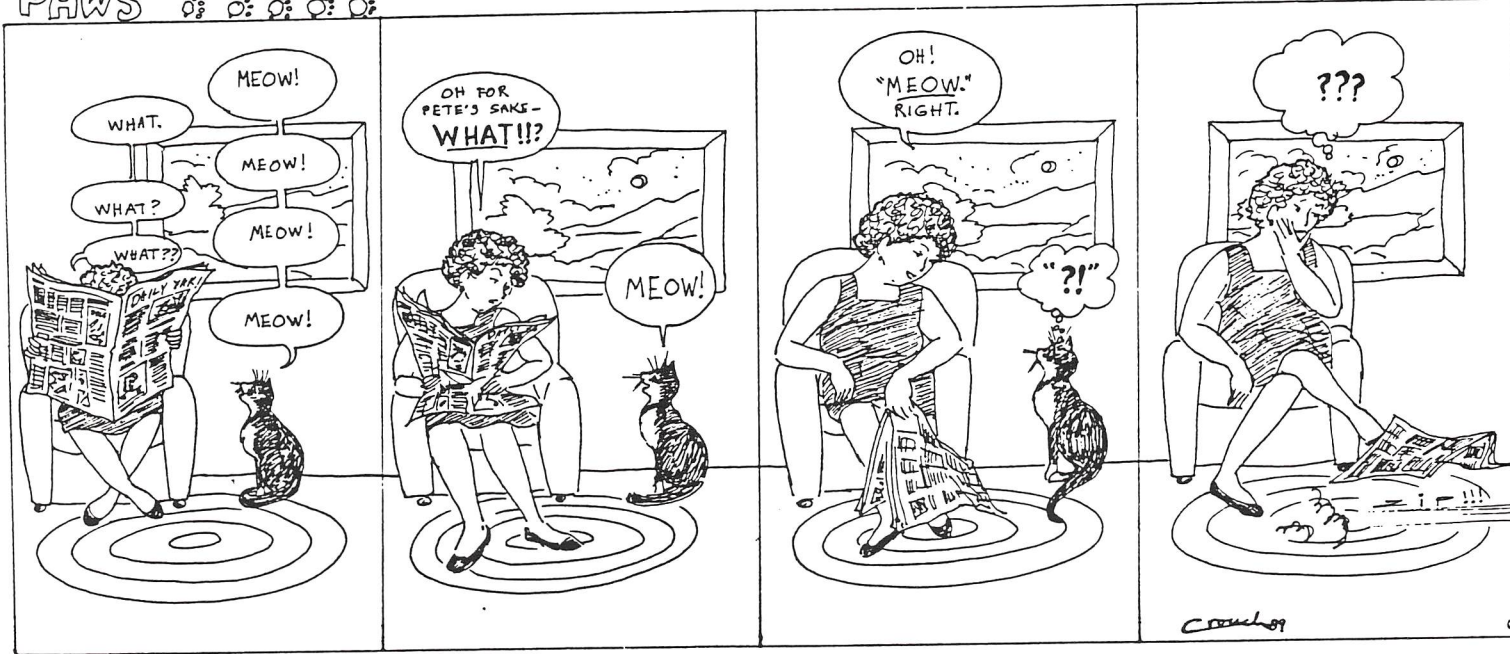
Thanks again to everyone, and I hope you like the zine.

JSM

This is the very first PAWS strip that Connie & Leah ever did. Sound familiar?

PAWS ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

MCGREW/CROUCH 89

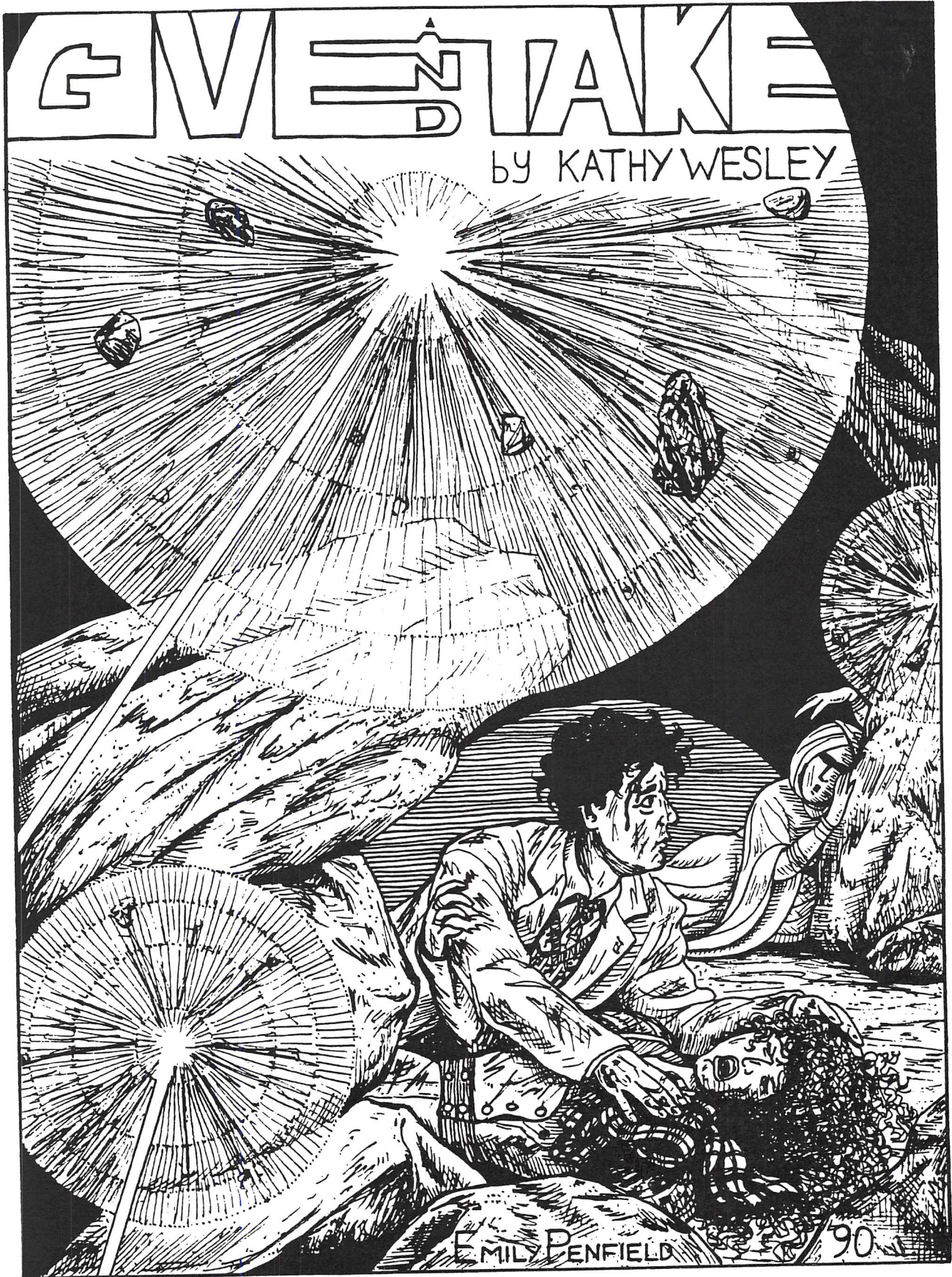


And this one was done especially for THE LIEUTENANT'S LOG...for obvious reasons!

PAWS ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺

MCGREW/CROUCH 89





If it weren't that he was wounded and scared half out of his wits, the Doctor would have been embarrassed.

Being pinned down by Cybermen while rescuing the Woverom ambassador from a botched kidnapping was not the embarrassing part.

It was being pinned down in a blind alley cavern two miles beneath the ground.

For maybe 15 minutes now the hail of Cyberfire had continued, drenching him and his badly injured companion Melanie in sparks and acrid dust from the pile of boulders where they'd taken shelter.

Although dazed from the running and the diving and the falling, the Doctor had chucked off his straw hat and was turning to check on Melanie's bleeding shoulder when he thought he heard a cry from another portion of the cave.

They had lost Ambassador Kellan in the fighting and confusion, and the Doctor feared she might be wounded--or even dead.

The gunfire had let up for just a moment, and the Doctor shook the dust out of his dark hair and pushed himself up on his fingertips, hoping to see a little better in the dark.

But then a laserbolt seared by the Doctor's left ear, striking the rear wall of the cave and sending off a shower of sparks. At his feet, Melanie's wordless cries grew louder, her eyes shooting panic into his.

"Kellan!" the Doctor shouted into the darkness. "We've got to do something quickly! She'll lose her mind if we can't get her pain under control."

Just then, another bolt barreled in like a fireball, glancing off the rock protecting the Doctor and Mel. The Doctor dove for cover, silently cursing the ineptitude that had trapped him in this place.

Leaning over Mel, he checked the makeshift bandage slung across her shoulder--and winced in pain as the sudden change in his position brought his headache back again. Blood was steadily oozing from the laceration on his scalp, and the concussion from the blow was telegraphing pain throughout his skull.

I don't know how much of this I can take myself, the Doctor wondered wordlessly. Where were those Woverom warriors he'd sent for?

Steadying himself against the dizziness and pain, he tried his best to comfort his companion, stroking her tangled red curls and muttering God knows what kind of Gallifreyan gibberish into her ear as the energy bolts crashed and thundered overhead.

But her panicked whimpering continued, bordering dangerously on hysteria.

"Come on, Mel!" he insisted, turning her over and cradling her blood-spattered face in his hands. "Can't you look into my eyes? I'm only trying to help you! Can't you just look into my eyes like a good girl, and let me hypnotise you?"

But it was obvious his words weren't reaching her, and against his will the Doctor began panicking himself.

"Kellan!" he cried again, desperately. "Where are you?"

After a moment, there was still no reply, and the Doctor craned his head backward to see the white-cloaked Woverom lying behind the next rock, not five meters away.

"I heard you, Doctor," the Woverom hissed. "But what do you suggest we do?"

The Doctor's face contorted into a scowl. "How should I know?" he growled. "You're the empath! You're the one who can take on others' pain! Can't you do something for her before she goes insane?"

A bolt slammed hard into the wall between them, and the Doctor hooked his arm over his eyes to protect them from the sparks. They're getting too close, the Doctor thought.

"There's no way I can help her!" Kellan shouted back. "I'm wounded myself, and can't get close enough to put my hands on her to make the transfer!"

"So what can we do?" the Doctor cried, growing ever more impatient. "I don't think you appreciate the delicacy of the human frame and psyche!"

"Oh, but I do," Kellan replied. She thought a moment, and then shouted to him again. "Doctor, there's only one thing for it: you'll have to take care of it yourself."

"What?!" the Doctor cried. "I'm not an empath! I'm a Time Lord! One of the most insensitive races in the universe! I can barely stand my own pain--much less feel anyone else's."

The Woverom laughed--an odd sound bouncing through the gunfire. "Don't be distracted by the facts, Doctor," Kellan shouted over the din. "Just close your eyes, and focus on your own mind. Imagine--" she stopped, and ducked to miss a hit, "--Imagine that your body is totally light and empty, and that it has an infinite capacity for acceptance."

The Doctor shut his eyes, flinching every time a blast hit home nearby.

"And then what?" the Doctor shouted back.

The Woverom's words were strong and steady. "Then take her pain, Doctor," the empath said. "Take her pain."

The Doctor looked down at Mel and frowned. This is preposterous, he thought. But at that moment another blast hit the wall behind them, its sparks singeing his eyebrows and landing on Melanie's bare arm. She screamed again and dug her nails into his sleeve. The Doctor winced in sympathetic pain. Kellan was right. There was nothing for it but to try.

Closing his eyes, the Doctor tried to imagine in the way the Woverom had directed. But the pain in his head came ramming down like a meteor, filling every open pore in his body. Even his breath was trapped by the pain, lodged in the upper cavity of his chest.

"I can't!" he shouted helplessly. "I can't do it! My own pain won't allow it!"

Kellan's voice came back to him suddenly slowly now, sonorous and steady. "Doctor," she said, "you can do it. Just close your eyes and breathe into your pain. Imagine the breath coming deep into your body and leaving it through your pain."

He tried again, but it was difficult to manage; when he attempted to draw his breath directly through the pain, it seemed as solid as a wall. Nothing came though, and he felt even more helpless than before.

Tears of frustration started welling in the corners of his eyes. Why did he have to be such an incompetent when his closest friend was counting on him?

"Doctor, you're not disappearing!" cried Kellan. "You have to lose your concept of yourself! If even a shred of you exists, the pain will stick to you like glue! Disappear, for heaven's sake!"

Disappear? The Doctor thought bewilderedly. Could she mean that "light and empty" bit?

He closed his eyes, and tried to imagine as she'd said. In a flash, he mentally erased his clothing, and his skin, and then each and every internal organ he could think of.

And when the mental process was complete, he felt suddenly giddy and lightheaded. There was not even a being called "Doctor" he could label.

The entire experience could have been disorienting, even frightening, had not a more important thought raced suddenly through his mind.

He remembered that he had to breathe.

As he drew his breath this third time, it was easy to see it passing through his pain. As he took it in and blew it out, it seemed to pass through the pain like a light breeze through a curtain.

The resulting sensation was unusual; the pain at first seemed stronger, but at the same time less terrible and fearsome. His breath grew ever deeper, and he soon felt surrounded by his pain as by a thick and welcome blanket.

Surprisingly, Mel's cries began to die away, and her eyes closed as if in sleep. Could she have felt his fear? the Doctor wondered. She had always seemed to be a sensitive girl...

"That's good," Kellan called to him, her voice spearing through the bombast. "Now, concentrate on Mel. Imagine the pain leaving her, and coming into you."

The Doctor grimaced. This was going to be the dicey part.

He looked at Mel's prone form and tenuously held out his hands toward her, as though trying to strategize the logistics of touching her.

Lying down beside her, he took her hands and placed them on the blood-stained shoulders of his jacket. He then gingerly placed his hands on hers. He didn't know if this would make a bit of difference, but it seemed the proper thing to do.

The throbbing in his head momentarily pacified, he was able at last to focus on her pain. With every in-breath, he imagined her pain leaving her body through her hands and entering his own; with every out-breath he gave her his energy and life.

It was an odd sort of exchange; at first he psychically resisted the notion of taking on her pain, but then he remembered the illusion-like nature of his form. If there was no Doctor to exist, who was there to be hurt?

Slowly, confidently now, he mentally breathed his own life into his companion, imagining it to be coolest of moonlight on the hottest of Earth's summer nights. And when he breathed in to take her pain, he imagined it entering his heart like the blackest pool of molten lava.

And as the lava touched his heart, he felt it diminish his own ego, as though burning it in a purifying flame.

Logic would have told him this would hurt somehow, but he actually felt light and energized.

It was as though his ability to accept Mel's pain increased as his preoccupation with his own pain slipped away. Perhaps this, then, was the secret power of the empath's: Total openness. Absolute surrender of the self.

After a few minutes, the Doctor fell into a mental rhythm, breathing light and darkness through the empty spaces of his own mind. He had at last closed his tired, burning eyes, and so did not see Melanie open hers.

Time disappeared, and so did the Doctor's awareness of his body. After a while there existed only two forces in the universe: his life's breath and Melanie's pain.

It was not until almost a quarter-hour had passed that he realized the Cyberfire had stopped.

"Mel!" He opened his eyes and was shocked to find Melanie looking into them. "I think the cavalry's arrived! Do you think you can sit up?"

She nodded her assent, then shakily allowed herself to be lifted up by the Doctor to lean against the rock. He patted her head playfully and smiled.

"Feeling better?" he asked.

"Yes," she said slowly, almost in surprise. "And you?"

The Doctor had to think about that for a moment. "Yes," he said at last, patting himself down. "Not too badly, all in all."

Kellan crept over to the pair, still not sure the Cybergun salvos had finally ended.

"It's absolutely amazing," the Doctor said as she drew near. "I'm not an empath, but I could swear that what I did had some effect. I even felt better, myself."

"That's an unusual outcome," Kellan mused, sitting down beside them. "It doesn't usually work that way."

She re-arranged her robe, looked at the pair and smiled. "So it did work, did it, then?"

"Yes," the Doctor and Mel chimed in together.

"What do you mean, 'yes'?" the Doctor asked, eyeing his companion. "I was the one helping you."

"But Doctor," Melanie replied. "I was listening to Kellan's instructions, too. I thought she was telling me what I could do for **you**."

"You mean," Kellan said, suppressing a laugh, "that you both were taking on each other's pain?"

The Doctor and Mel looked at each other incredulously. "No wonder it worked!" the Doctor smiled. "We have more talent than we thought."

A lot of time has passed
A lot of words have been said
But nothing has changed
We still circle each other like fighters in the ring.
What happened to the loving friendship we once shared
It's still in you, but you are giving it to strangers instead.
At one time I believe you trusted me,
Yet you still believed the worst.
The pain was strong, yet I was still willing to try again.
I wanted the friendship to still tie us together.
Was I wrong again?

Kandi

A TIMELY ENCOUNTER

PAT DUNN & DIANA SMITH

It was festival time. The green meadow on the outskirts of the prosperous village was cluttered with all the trappings of the season. Merchants' booths, beneath bright awnings, drew the attention of passers-by, while the tradesmen and food sellers loudly cried their wares. Banners flapped in the afternoon breeze, and the spring sunlight dazzled from the glass beads on the bridles of the warsteeds being drilled in formation. Herdsmen drove their cattle and sheep in and out of rude pens, while their wives haggled over the prices of eggs and cheese. Children ran everywhere, dogs at their heels, or gathered around the jugglers and mummers. The air buzzed with excitement, punctuated as it was by laughter, shouts and the jingle of money exchanging hands.

Amidst this scene of benign chaos walked two men. One, an open-faced youth with golden hair, was attired in the party-colored garb of the entertainer. Slung on his back he carried an outlandish instrument--a sort of two-necked lute cum wood-wind--which seemed to support his identity as a wandering minstrel. At the moment, his hands were filled with warm meat-pies from one of the food vendors, and his brown eyes closed in anticipation as he savored the first bite. "Sure you don't want one?" he mumbled around a mouthful of juicy pastry.

The minstrel's companion gave him a sideways glance, then shook his dark head. "Not now, Myal." He stopped by a tree stump, considered a moment with his ebony eyes, then sat down, carefully settling his left leg.

"Still bothering you, is it?" asked Myal as he sat on the grass beside the lame man.

Parl Dro ignored the query, his gaze roaming over the scene of activity before them.

"This is my kind of place," Myal said, taking another huge bite of meat-pie.

"How many purses did you pick today?" Dro asked dryly.

"Only a couple," Myal protested. "The owners deserved it, though!" He was silent until he had thoroughly licked the grease from his fingers. Then, "When are you supposed to hear about that paying job the burghers mentioned?"

"Soon," Dro said, not very informatively. He was listening with his seventh sense, trying to focus on the possible source of the supernatural "disturbance" the townsmen had told him about. "I think," he said slowly, "something is going to happen--soon." He drew his black mantle closer around him, though the sun was still warm.

Myal watched the ghost-killer, head tilted to one side. "You're right," he agreed. "Sun'll be down soon enough." He pulled the musical instrument around onto his lap, strummed it idly, blew a note or two on the reed.

They waited, the magic of Myal's music capturing a small gathering. The musician-thief had painstakingly reconstructed the bizarre instrument which had been destroyed at Ghyste Mortua, and the music he created was just as hauntingly beautiful as before. Dro watched the agile fingers caress the strings, working the stops simultaneously, creating a melody unheard-of by any of the fascinated spectators. He stood, ignoring the gnawing ache in his leg, wandered off to the bewitching strains of Myal's music.

Walking slowly, his limp was scarcely noticeable and did not detract from his graceful movements. He was absently eyeing the offerings at one merchant's booth when a dainty female figure flung herself at him, fists pummeling his chest.

"How could you?!" she shrieked, tears of anger sparkling in emerald green eyes. "You promised that if I--if we--you'd leave us alone! I only did it to free you both, and now you've broken your promise!"

Dro grasped the fine-boned wrists, frowned down at the furious woman. "I beg your pardon, lady, but you appear to have mistaken me for someone else--who are you?"

"Don't play innocent, Keldred--it doesn't suit you," she said, struggling to free herself from his grasp. "I haven't changed my mind, so just let Kel go. I can't stay with you; you know that. And don't think I'll couple with you again!"

He was conscious of the amused stares of bystanders, and shook his head impatiently. "My name is NOT

Keldred--and I have never seen you before, madam." He felt a qualm at those words--after all, he had forgotten a great deal recently, prior to the journey to Ghyste Mortua. But he was certain that he would have recalled such a woman as SHE. "Nor have I done anything to you, whoever you may be."

"Perhaps you destroyed a ghost she valued," one onlooker suggested, shrinking at the black gaze sent his way.

"You know, Parl, it's not very flattering to a woman's ego for you to admit you've forgotten an encounter," Myal said, elbowing his way through the small crowd, instrument slung over his shoulder. He stared at the delicate blonde beauty struggling in Dro's grip, certain the encounter hadn't been a recent one. Had they met her since they'd begun travelling together, he'd remember her.

"Please let us go," she pleaded, staring up at Parl. Her gaze seemed to pierce his ghostly soul and a backlash of psychic resonance, unlike any he had ever known, tore through him.

He dropped the woman's hands, limped away from her, paused and looked back at her. She was staring at his lame leg, a look of bewilderment on her delicate features. "I would discuss this with you, madam--but here is not the place." He glared significantly at the onlookers, added, "You seem distressed--perhaps if you told me of your problem, I may be able to help you." He waited, his dark eyes holding hers.

"I should be able to link with your mind--we did bond, I know we did. But if you're not Keldred, who are you? And what's happened to Kel?" Her fury seemed to have withered and died, replaced by confusion and despair.

"My name is Parl Dro," he answered quietly, turning his head as a young man pushed his way up to him.

"Ghost-Killer! The burghers have sent me to fetch you--they are awaiting you in the village meetinghouse. They want to speak with you about the--" the youth lowered his voice anxiously. "--disappearances!"

Dro eyed him, looked at the young woman. "Perhaps you should come with us."

"Kel disappeared," she agreed, blindly clutching at any hope offered, no matter how slim or fleeting. "There could be a connection--I've got to find him!" It seemed she'd finally accepted the fact that Dro was not the mysterious Keldred and her fury was now a near-frantic desperation.

"There, there, lady," said Myal, gallantly putting a comforting arm around her shoulders. "It'll be all right, you'll see...If anyone can help you, WE can--isn't that so, Parl?"

"You talk too much," Dro said, turning to follow the guide back to the village.

Myal led the distraught woman after them, chattering soothingly to her. "Myal Lemyal, at your service, ma'am--who's this Kel you're so worried about, anyway? Your man?" She nodded silently, gaze fastened on Dro's back as if he was her salvation. "Oh," said Myal, his smile fading a bit. "Well, don't worry--we'll find him, I promise, Lady...?"

"Aureela," she said in response to his prompting. "My name is Aureela."

"Aureela," Myal repeated, preparing to wax poetic. Parl recognized the dreamy tones, and shot the musician a warning glance.

"I'm so worried about Kel," the young woman said, unaware of Myal's romantic notions. "It's not at all like him to disappear, and I can't even contact him. I-I sense something terrible is happening, and I can't help him."

At that, Myal's gaze met Dro's, and a silent message of understanding seemed to flash between them. So she's psychic, Dro thought. Interesting...

In due time, the group arrived at the grey stone meetinghouse to find seven of the town's elders waiting for them.

"We have a contract with you, Ghost-Killer," the oldest man frowned, glancing at Aureela. "The fee does not change because you have brought along extra help--"

The Lady Aureela is here to offer evidence," Dro cut in, "not to assist in the exorcism. The fee you mentioned will be acceptable."

"But--" Myal began, wisely shutting up at the look Dro shot him. He reluctantly subsided and listened as the elders' tongues began falling over themselves in their haste to pour out their woes.

It had begun, the account went, with the death of Fanya Ivilla some thirteen months earlier. Fanya was a witch-beauty, a woman who used her allure to wed many men in succession. As most of them had been landowners or merchants with no heirs at their deaths. Fanya had eventually become the wealthiest citizen in the area. Unfortunately, she had not the slightest trace of virtue, and used her money only to inflict misery on those beneath her rule.

The townsfolk thought themselves vindicated when Fanya Ivilla had been found dead in her stone house, sprawled on her bedroom floor, the pool of blood beneath her seeming black in the moonlight. They had buried the still-beautiful woman, though some of the priests murmured of suicide and shook their heads at the waste of consecrated ground.

Most people cared little for the circumstances of Mistress Ivilla's death, and rejoiced only that she was dead. But...

"The disappearances began not a fortnight after the funeral," the youngest burgher exclaimed, glancing nervously over his shoulder.

"What sort of--disappearances?" asked Myal, his tone reflecting the apprehension he was beginning to feel about this entire business.

"Our young men," came the reply, sending a chill which wrapped itself around Aureela's hearts.

"She's got Kel," she murmured, covering her face with trembling hands.

Myal patted her shoulder, looked at Dro as he said, "Perhaps she has, indeed..." The ghost-killer looked at the mayor. "Where is Mistress Ivilla's house?"

They gave him directions gladly, eager to see them on their way. Dro looked at Aureela, hesitant to take her with them, certain she would just be in the way. "If your husband is there, we'll do our best to free him. In the meantime, I'm sure these kind people will see to your comfort--"

"But I'm going with you! Kel is in danger and needs me," she protested, wiping away the tears with the back of her hand. "Please, Parl, don't try to leave me behind because I'll just have to sneak after you."

"Oh, you don't want to do that," Myal put in. "I'll stay here and look after you..."

"You will NOT," Dro said firmly. "I need you along, Myal. As for Lady Aureela--" he paused, shrugged as the pleading eyes bored into him. "Very well, accompany us if you must."

The determined look on her lovely face said she certainly did have to accompany them. Parl raised an amused dark eyebrow at Myal's protectiveness towards the lady. It was obvious he harbored a yearning for her but he would honor her concern for this Kel. Myal with morals was an oddity Dro wasn't sure he was ready for.

They headed for Ivilla's house as the shadows lengthened into twilight. Dro became aware of Aureela's curious gaze studying him, and a warning tingle crept up his spine. She was trying to see his soul, read his mind, and his limp became more pronounced.

"Are you and your man from this area?" he asked finally, to distract her as well as elicit information from her.

"What? Oh, no, we're not," she said, still staring at him as if trying to penetrate his defenses. "So much sadness," she added softly, one hand lightly touching his arm.

Parl shivered and drew away from her touch. Her psychic power was tremendous--she seemed capable of reading his very emotions. "I thought not," he said, careful to keep distance between Aureela and himself. "Myal and I are strangers here ourselves."

Aureela's lip twisted in a peculiar little smile. "Strangers yet not alien," she said cryptically. "You belong here--with him. You and Myal somehow belong together..."

"As you belong with Kel," Dro said, and then wondered why he knew that.

"Yes," Aureela whispered, eyes downcast as her hearts desperately called out to her missing bondmate.

Myal came up beside them, his lantern swinging from his hand. "Looks as if we're about there--I'm getting gooseflesh already, too, I might add."

"Afraid of a mere ghost, Myal?" asked Dro, halting to scan the deserted, weed-grown track which led to the stone house on the rise ahead of them.

"Of course not! But this doesn't sound like a 'mere ghost'," Myal protested, holding the lantern as if his life depended on its reassuring glow. "Ghosts feed off the living, draining them of energy--you've told me that, Parl. But it takes time, doesn't it? This Ivilla seems insatiable and is going through humans faster than I go through a flask of ale."

Aureela gave a little cry of distress at Myal's words, and Dro glared at the musician. "She--she wants to feed on my Kel?"

"It would seem likely," Dro admitted reluctantly. "Fanya Ivilla spent her life preying on others--her ghost seems to be continuing in the same manner."

"Do you suppose the house is her link?" Myal asked hopefully. "Maybe we could set fire to it or something..."

Dro shook his dark head briefly. "They say she has taken one living soul each week since her death--none have returned. She must have grown very strong by now."

"Great," Myal muttered, "just what I wanted to hear--so what are we supposed to do now, eh?"

"We have to get Kel out of there!" Aureela exclaimed, clutching at Parl's black sleeve. "You don't understand--if feeding on another's energy increases her strength, she'll become invincible."

"What?" asked Dro, fixing his dark gaze upon the young woman. "Please tell us what you mean, Lady Aureela."

Aureela chewed on her lip, considering what she'd already revealed. These were a superstitious people, really rather primitive and not likely to understand the truth. She would have to proceed with caution, gauging their reactions and not tell them more than they could handle.

"We come from a place far from here," she began, watching as Myal's brown eyes widened and he moved a step closer to Dro. "Our people have learned the secrets of long life. Kel and I are quite young, with hundreds of years ahead of us. Your ghost has a virtually endless source of energy now."

They stared at her through the last glimmers of daylight, as the sky darkened and the evening air began to chill. Myal's lantern cast a fitful glow over the three as he murmured, "Is she mad?!"

"No," Dro said, "not that." He gave Aureela a peculiar half-smile, added, "If what you say is true--and I do not know why you should say it, otherwise--then we have more reason than ever to hurry. Come along, Myal." There was more behind her words, but Parl could not penetrate the psychic shield around her mind. Yet somehow he knew she spoke the truth.

The musician stood stock-still. "No one lives hundreds of years--you're just going to take that ridiculous story of hers at face value?!"

"Why not?" Dro asked, glancing at the sky where the first few stars were beginning to appear. "True or not, a man is in danger--we must try to help him."

"Must we?" muttered Myal as Dro limped away from him. But he held the lantern higher and followed against his better judgement.

"Thank you, Parl," Aureela exclaimed, hurrying alongside the pale, dark-haired man. "I was afraid you wouldn't understand..."

"I do not," he said shortly. "But I have seen enough strange things on this world to be more open-minded than Myal there." He fell silent, remembering how he and Silky had once discussed the notion of people living among the stars--childish wonderings, no more. The lovely blonde at his side reminded him of Silky in many ways with her childlike trust and innocence...He put away the long-ago memories, turned his mind to the task at hand.

"So much evil...so much sadness," Aureela said, her voice strangely distant as they paused to stare at the black silhouette of Fanya Ivilla's house against the twilight. "He's in there, I can feel it. But I can't make contact with his mind. Could she have drugged him? Kel doesn't like drugs." She shivered in the cool evening air, gaze fastened on the house before them. It wasn't the cold she felt so much as Fanya's evilness.

"Take this," Dro said, shrugging out of his black cloak. "The cold does not bother me as it does most people."

"That's true enough," muttered Myal as Dro placed the black mantle around Aureela's shoulders and adjusted the hood to conceal her honey-blond curls. "Do we just walk right up and knock on the door?"

"She knows we're here," Aureela said, pale face framed by the black hood. "And why." Even in the dim light from Myal's lantern, Dro could easily see the anxiety in her green eyes. "She won't let Kel go."

"And even if she did, she'd just find another source," Myal said, giving the musical instrument slung across his back a reassuring pat.

"I think perhaps you two should stay here," Dro began, "and allow me to confront her alone..."

"But you can't do that!" Aureela exclaimed.

"You'd be surprised what he can do," Myal said to her. He glanced behind him, looked at Dro. "But I won't LET you do that, Parl."

"This is hardly the time for heroics," Dro admonished. "You and Aureela are vulnerable--I am not..."

"We go together or stay together," Myal insisted, throwing another nervous glance over his shoulder.

Dro glared at the stubborn minstrel, then jerked his head up as his seventh-sense tingled warningly. 'Do come in, Parl Dro,' a voice said in his mind. 'And bring your companions, by all means--we have been expecting you.' There was an echo of feminine laughter, tinged with mockery, then the voice faded and he was conscious of Aureela's hand on his arm and Myal's anxious expression. "It seems we have little choice," he sighed, approaching the double front doors which swung open for them on silent hinges.

Aureela promptly headed up the steps to the doors. Myal found this bit of magic disturbing and he clutched at Aureela with one hand while the other sought Parl's arm.

"You've seen magic before, Myal," Dro said, pausing as the young man grasped his sleeve.

"Just because I've seen it doesn't mean I have to like it!" Myal whispered. "This crazy, Parl--you can't mean for us to go in THERE!"

"I intend to go in," Dro said, shrugging his shoulders and slipping from Myal's frantic grasp. "And I'm sure Lady Aureela has the same intentions. Would you prefer to wait for us out here?"

"Right, I'll just do that, shall I?" Myal retorted, folding his arms and giving every evidence of immobility.

"As you like," Dro said, turning his back on his obstinate companion. With a light touch on her shoulder, he guided Aureela across the threshold of the house, paused--and waited.

Myal bounded up the steps and into the accursed house, lantern bobbing as he moved. "You'll need this," he said, holding it out towards Dro.

"Not I," the ghost-killer said dryly, "but thank you for bringing it, Myal."

"Might as well stay, now that I'm here," the younger man said, moving closer to Aureela.

"You might as well," Dro agreed, a slight smile curving his lips. Aureela moved away from them both, pushing the hood off her head.

"He's here--I can feel it," she whispered as Dro caught her arm, holding her back. "I must go to him!"

"Show us the way," Dro said in a tone of quiet command. Clasping her hand in his, he followed as Aureela led them through a maze of dust-veiled chambers, up and down flights of stairs and at last to a cold, cold room on the uppermost story of the house. It was barred by a thick wooden door bound with iron. A yellow glow shone from the crack between its lower edge and the flagstone floor.

The trio halted before it. Dro sensed that Aureela had led them not only to the living, but to the deadalive as well. "Fanya Ivilla," he called, "we have answered your--invitation. Is it your custom to keep guests waiting?"

Aureela's hands were pressed against the door, seeking entrance. "Kel! Can you hear me? Please answer me, beloved!"

Myal's hopes for any dalliance with the lady were dashed by the heart-breaking despair in her voice. He jumped and whirled as a woman's voice spoke from behind them. Dro turned more slowly while Aureela looked towards it, palms still spread against the door.

"I am afraid he's unable to respond just now," the ghost said, fading into view. She was beautiful and pale, dressed in a white gown with scarlet trim on the bodice and sleeves. "Welcome, all of you--but especially you, Parl Dro."

"Let my Kel go!" Aureela exclaimed.

"That is not possible--Time Lady," Fanya Ivilla retorted. "I have plans for him--and you."

"No!" Aureela protested, taking a step towards the ghost, fists clenched. "I don't know what you've done to him but you'd better undo it right now. Then we'll be on our way."

Her answer was a burst of sweet, clear laughter which resounded most incongruously in the dank corridor. "That is not the way it will be, my dear, I assure you!"

Parl Dro stepped forward, placing himself between Aureela and the deadalive witch. "You must deal with ME first, Mistress Ivilla."

"Do not be a fool, Dro," she chided, giving him a smile that would chill a mortal man's heart. "You see how strong I am--nearly as strong as you yourself. With the lifepower of these aliens, I shall soon be solid enough to walk in the noon sun and cast a shadow, as YOU do."

"No," he answered. "I shall destroy you first."

"This is the ghost who will finally destroy the hypocritical ghost-killer," Fanya promised, looking over his shoulder at Myal. "It's only fitting, don't you think? How many of your own kind have you destroyed, Parl Dro?"

"She knows," Myal whispered, face as pale as a true ghost. "She KNOWS!"

"Quiet, Myal," Dro snapped, gaze never leaving the deadalive's.

"Your son is quite right--I know all I need," Fanya smiled at Myal, a calculating look in her cold eyes. "To destroy a ghost, one need only destroy his link to the mortal world--once it is known."

Myal shrank back, seeing his death in her eyes. Aureela felt his terror and even in her confusion, her hearts went out to the trembling human.

"I understand that he is as you are," Aureela said to the deadalive witch. "But just as there are good humans and evil ones, so there are good and evil of your kind. Your evil is a tangible thing and must not be allowed to continue."

Anger twisted the beautiful face for a moment, then Fanya smiled at her. "On the contrary, little one, with this wondrous vehicle I have seen in your man's thoughts, I shall have access to a thousand worlds--each with living souls to feed my hunger. None of you will be able to stop me!"

"The TARDIS will not operate for YOU," Aureela retorted, afraid that even that detail would not be a deterrent.

"Kel will instruct me in its magic," the deadalive woman said, not at all concerned. She made a careless gesture, and the door to the bedchamber swung open of its own accord.

Inside was a bed, on which lay a young fair-haired man. Aureela sprang across the threshold to his side. "Kel!"

Dro blocked the doorway, but Fanya merely eyed him with amusement. "I will allow them their time together--brief as it may be. First I must attend to you." She reached towards Myal, her intentions quite clear.

"Get inside!" Dro shouted, pushing the terrified minstrel behind him.

Myal stumbled through the doorway, took refuge in the middle of the bedchamber. He glanced over his shoulder, saw that Aureela was trying desperately to awaken Kel. A shriek from the deadalive witch brought his head around and he saw that Dro was grappling with her, his hands on her wrists as she tried to scratch his face with her long nails.

"Myal, please help me with Kel," Aureela pleaded, shaking her unconscious bondmate. "If he's awake, he can shield himself so she can't use him. Please, Myal!"

He stared at her, looked back at the pair of struggling ghosts, then fumbled for his instrument. Placing his trembling fingers on the strings, he began to play. The chords seemed to calm him and dispel some of his fear, and he bent his fair head to the reed, adding trilling notes to the harmony.

Kel stirred under the anxious touch of his bondmate, lured by the sound of Myal's music. His blue eyes flickered open, seeing his beloved Aureela's face--he thought. "Aureela--?" he asked hesitantly, afraid she was another illusion as so many had been already.

She flung her arms around him. "Kel, you've got to shield your mind from her! I'll help..." Her mind linked with his, adding power as he struggled against Fanya Ivilla's spell.

Myal continued playing, his gaze on the witch woman and Dro. The ghost-killer seemed to be drawing strength from Myal's music, and he forced Fanya backward, one step, then two...

Kel staggered to his feet, Aureela lending her support. "I--what's going on?!"

"We've got to help him," she replied, nodding towards Dro. "She was feeding on your energy, and she wants us to pilot the TARDIS for her so she can feed on others. We can't let that happen, Kel, so we must help Parl defeat her."

Dro called, "The link must be found and broken. Isn't that so, Fanya Ivilla?!" He shook the cowering deadalive woman who winced with each note of Myal's music. "Search the bedroom--it could be anything--a lock of hair, an article of clothing--find it! Myal, keep playing--it hurts her."

Myal lifted his head from the mouthpiece of the reed, just long enough to draw a deep breath and grin maliciously at the captive ghost. He resumed his wordless song, and Fanya's eyes closed with the pain of it.

"Ghosts are bound to earth by the loving thoughts of those who mourn them--but no one mourned YOU, did they? No, the only emotion accompanying YOUR death was joy! So perhaps that is why you preyed upon the living--that the tears shed by their mourners would somehow become your own." Dro taunted the ghost, hoping to weaken her or trick her into revealing her link.

Fanya made a small, strangled sound that might or might not have been an assent.

The music Myal was weaving in the cold, cold room wrapped itself around the occupants, sweet and piercingly sad. Fanya was not the only one feeling its effects--Aureela was sobbing openly, arms wrapped around her bondmate as if to ward off Fanya's evil.

"Don't stop playing!" Kel ordered Myal, who had hesitated at continuing his music upon seeing its effects on the gentle Time Lady. "Aureela will be all right."

"All the pain and sadness he's ever felt," she sobbed, voice muffled by Kel's shirtfront.

It was true. Myal Lemyal had unconsciously put into his song every bit of sorrow he had ever experienced, since his drunken stepfather had first taken notice of him with a blow. All the loneliness, all the bitterness--it was there in Myal's music, being transformed into the melancholic tune he played.

Aureela's tele-empathic powers could not help but sense the minstrel's emotions, and they very nearly overwhelmed her. Kel, though still somewhat weakened by his ordeal, linked minds with his bondmate and tried to help her shield herself from them. Gradually, Aureela's sobs lessened and she was able to lift her face and look at him. "Thank you," she murmured.

Myal lifted his mouth from the reed, though his fingers continued to strum the strings. "I'm sorry," he whispered, ashamed of the tears wetting his own cheeks.

Parl Dro compressed his lips, ebony gaze fixed on the deadalive woman he still held captive.

"Make him stop," she pleaded, writhing in his grip. "Can't you see what he's doing to me?"

"I see," said Dro, "that you have done this to yourself, Fanya Ivilla."

"PLEASE make him stop," she begged. "YOU surely must understand--I cannot bear it..."

"What is the link?" he asked softly.

She shook her head, fear in her cold gray eyes.

"Well then," he said, "we will have to burn it all." He looked over her shoulder at Kel, jerked his head at the low-burning oil lamp hanging from the iron chain.

Kel, understanding, went and removed the lamp from its holder, then started towards the carved wooden bedstead with the feather mattress.

"No!" shrieked Fanya as he tossed the burning lamp onto it. "Damn you ALL!" She struggled mightily against Dro's grasp--then viciously wrenched free and flailed at him.

Dro staggered backwards, his left cheek suddenly bearing four red marks from her fingernails. His lame leg gave out under him, and he fell down several steps, coming to rest on the landing.

"Parl!" shouted Myal, forgetting to play.

Fanya Ivilla laughed and advanced on the three still in the room. She halted as Aureela snatched up the lantern Myal had earlier dropped on the floor and ran with it to a wooden wardrobe. Flinging open the door, she smashed the lantern and set fire to the mildewed gowns hanging on the pegs within it.

"No!" shrieked the deadalive woman as the flames licked and spread. "I want to live--!" She was beginning to lose her solidity, fading into mere mist.

"Run, Aureela!" Kel called. "Myal--" But the minstrel had already bolted from the room, which was rapidly becoming an inferno.

Kel took Aureela's hand, pulled her after him. Myal assisted him in closing the heavy wooden door, then they hurried to join Aureela at Dro's side.

The ghost-killer groaned once as they helped him to stand on his feet, then was resolutely silent.

"Let's get out of here!" Myal cried, supporting Dro's weight as they started down the staircase.

"Sounds good to me," Kel muttered, clasping Aureela's hand and following them.

Behind them, a flickering yellow glow lit their escape. A keening wail trailed after them, sending shivers up Aureela's spine as the deadalive finally relinquished her hold on her unlife.

"She's gone," Aureela whispered, one arm wrapped around Kel's waist as they stood outside watching the inferno. "Thank Rassilon you're safe!"

Breathing hard, Dro stared at the curling smoke rising from the flames. "Yes, she's gone," he affirmed, voice flat.

"Let's go collect our fee and get out of here," Myal suggested, anxious to put as much distance as possible between them and Fanya Ivilla's former home. "And have a drink!"

"All right," Dro agreed, turning and limping away. The others followed, their way illuminated only by the starlight. After a moment, Myal began strumming a gentle, dreamy tune on his instrument. This time, the sorrow was absent from the song and brought with it a soothing peace.

Eventually the group reached the village, where Dro and Myal attended to their business with the town burghers. After repeated assurances that the ghost of Fanya Ivilla had indeed been laid to rest, the council handed over two pouches of silver pieces. Myal secreted his about his person at once, looking considerably more content.

"You're welcome to come with us to the tavern," the musician said to Kel and Aureela, who had awaited them in the street outside.

Aureela glanced at Kel, who nodded.

A short time later, the strange quartet settled into a snug nook in the 'Red Crown', flagons of ale and wine before them. Kel stared at Parl Dro in the inn's lamplight, threw an inquiring look at his bondmate.

"I thought so, too," she murmured, "at first."

"Is something wrong?" Dro asked.

"No--excuse me," Kel said. "You--resemble someone we once knew, that's all."

"That can be quite enough, sometimes," commented Dro, meeting Myal's gaze and recalling how he had encountered the youth's mother.

Aureela studied him, noting curiously that the welts on his cheek had almost healed already. "If you heal so quickly, why do you have a limp? Why hasn't your leg healed?"

"Aureela, don't pry," Kel gently chided her, still a little disturbed by Dro's strong resemblance to his first self.

"It's an old injury," Dro shrugged, surprised that she had noticed. "It serves as a reminder."

She sensed his reluctance to discuss it, and so with equal reluctance she let the subject go. "I'm ever so grateful to you for your help in freeing Kel--I don't know what I would have done." Her hand reached out to cover Kel's, and he turned his hand over to grasp hers.

"Think nothing of it," Myal dismissed with an airy wave. "You weren't so bad yourselves--I think I'll write a song about you two." He grinned, tipped back his wine flask. "Beautiful lady and her mate torn apart by the evil Fanya Ivilla only to be reunited by the Ghost-Killer..." Myal rambled into his wine, oblivious to Dro's disapproval. "Her name is musical enough, but have to change his, though."

"I'm sure it would be a beautiful song," Aureela said, not caring if Myal wrote a hundred songs but certain he'd forget to compose even one. She snuggled up against Kel, his arm around her shoulders.

"You thought Parl was someone else," Myal persisted, motioning for a refill of wine. "You were furious with him, certain he was the one who'd caused your problems--you called him 'Keldred'."

"Yes," admitted Aureela. "I'm sorry for the things I said to you then, Parl."

Kel rubbed his chin against Aureela's silky honey-blond curls. Explaining how he could exist in two forms would be difficult, so it would be best to let them believe that Kel and Keldred were two separate beings--which, in a way, they were.

Dro regarded her a long moment, then said, "I regret having caused you distress, Aureela."

"It wasn't your fault," she assured him. "You must have thought I was quite insane."

"Kelwin," Myal mumbled, "that's what I'll use for you--you look like a Kelwin, you know--much better for the rhymes..." He trailed off, put his head down on the table and snored.

The others looked at him in astonishment, then Kel and Aureela chuckled, and even Dro allowed himself another smile. "He's had a tiring day," he said by way of excuse. "I'd best see about getting him to bed...while he's still sober enough to walk there." Despite his words, Dro's ebony eyes softened with affection as he looked at the sleeping musician.

"You really do take care of him, don't you?" Aureela said softly, causing him to stare at her.

"Not as well as I should," Dro said enigmatically. "Good night, Aureela--Kel." He rose, urged a wobbly Myal to his feet, started to lead him towards the stairs and a lodging room.

"Wait!" Aureela called, hurrying over to the duo. Parl looked puzzled, shifted Myal a bit and braced the half-conscious minstrel. "I want to thank you again for all you've done." She planted a kiss on Myal's cheek, then stood on her tip-toes to do the same to a bemused Dro. Myal grinned rather blearily, slumped against his companion.

"Beautiful," he mumbled.

"Yes," Dro agreed, looking at Aureela. "Off to bed now, Myal."

"Strange pair," Kel mused, looking after them. "Why do you suppose Dro bothers with him?"

Aureela met his gaze. "I think--that he's Myal's father..."

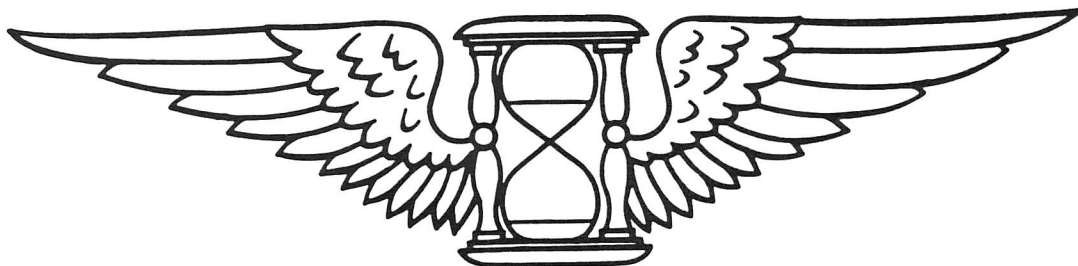
"That's impossible," Kel scoffed. "Dro's not old enough--" he broke off, frowned as he considered the notion.

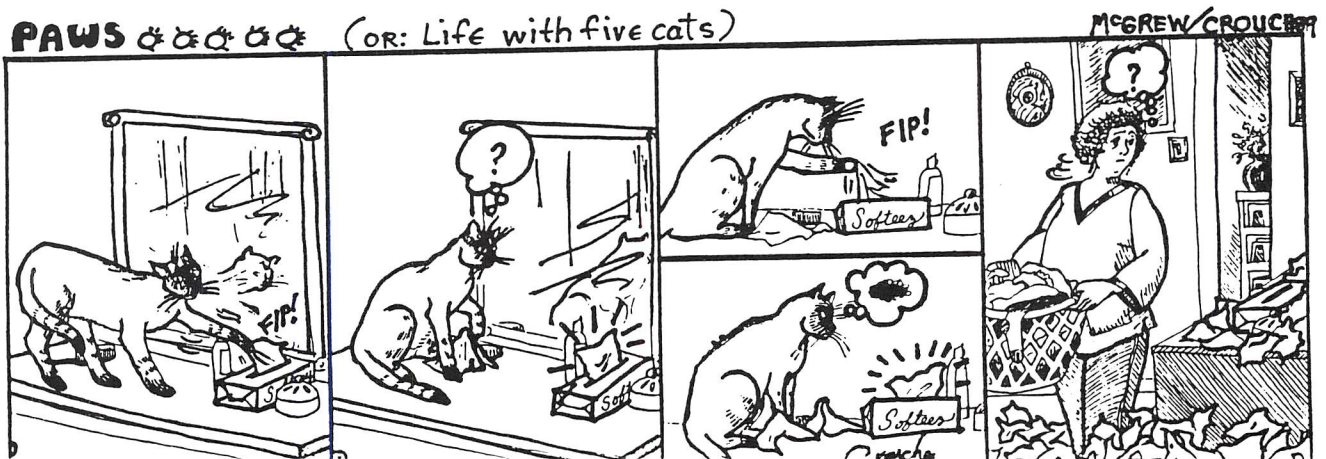
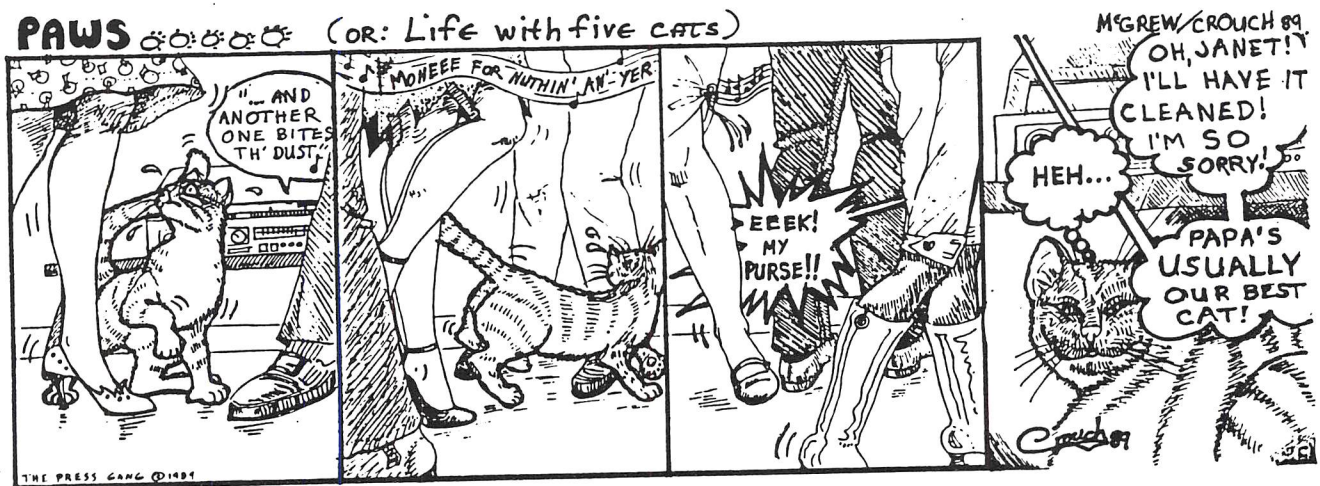
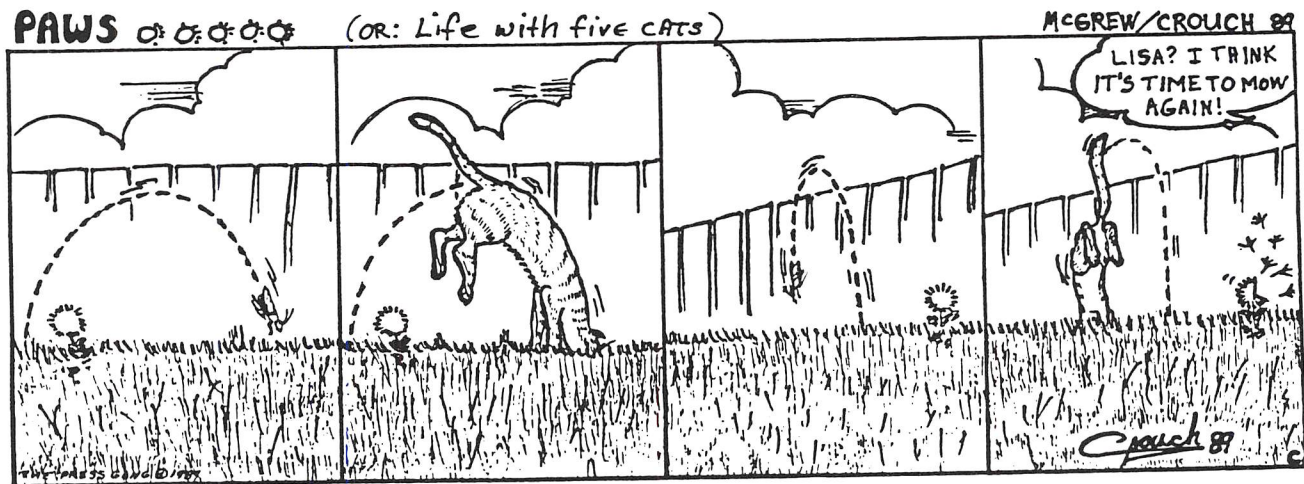
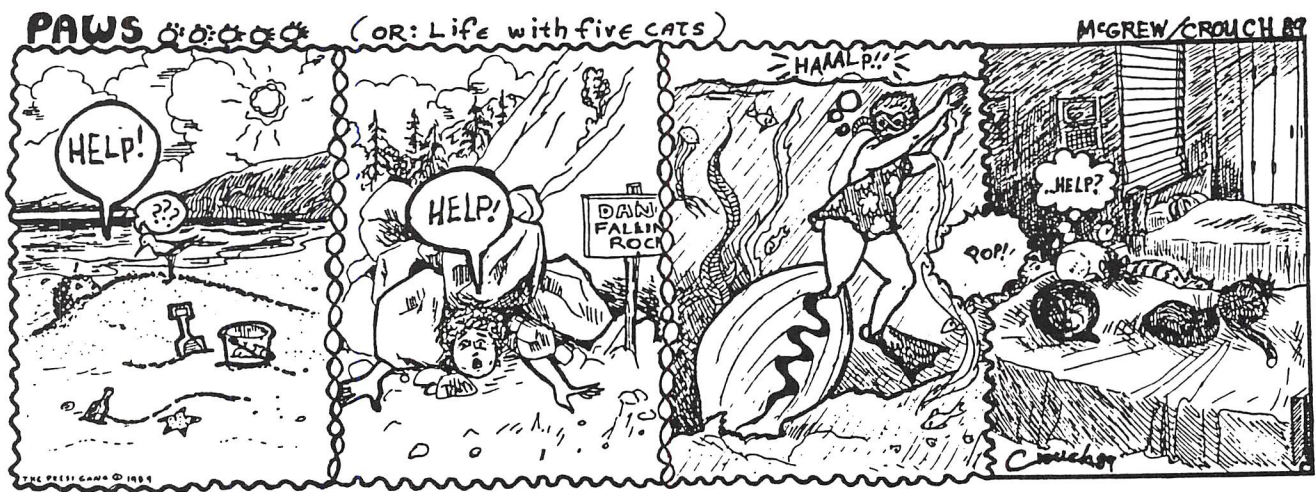
"He doesn't LOOK old enough," Aureela corrected. "But appearances can be deceiving, Kel."

"As you and I should know, eh?" he smiled. "Come on, pet--time we were going as well. I've had enough of this place. He put an arm around her, escorting her from the inn.

Above them, in a dark room, Myal snored peacefully while the figure of Parl Dro stood in the shadows watching and mulling over the day's happenings. Myal doubted the lady's story, but somehow the ghost-killer knew it to be true.

Walking over to the window, he looked out to see the reunited couple walking arm-in-arm, voices mere murmurs. Glancing up at the stars dancing in the moonlight, he smiled slightly and turned. He paused as a strange groaning sound caught his attention, stood listening until it had died away. Dro settled in a chair to watch over Myal. Come daylight, the minstrel would not be feeling his usual cheerful self, and he would not greet the news of their next job with eagerness.





THE

SHADOWS OF TIME



PART TWO

FINAL CONFRONTATION

BY STEVEN

VEVERKA



Judith Boguslawski '90

The Doctor sat quietly, chin in hands, in what appeared to be a patio of mossy, crumbling stone pillars. In fact, the 'patio' was just another one of the countless rooms and chambers in the technological wonder known as the TARDIS. It was here that he came when he wanted solitude; to think, to rest, to reason. The last time he had been here, he had been with Adric.

The controls refused to budge; the Cyberleader had caused too much damage. On the screen, the freighter glowed brilliantly as it plunged into the atmosphere. In the soundless vacuum of space, the ship exploded as the anti-matter containment vessel disintegrated.

The Doctor buried his face in his hands. He had thought himself over the pain and guilt, but the creature, Dalmorth, had used the memory of Adric against him when it invaded the TARDIS. Even with Dalmorth destroyed, the recollection hurt.

All the boy had ever wanted was to be like his brother.

Quiet footsteps came from the nearby shadows, and Melanie Bush appeared in a doorway, her usually cheerful elfin features a mixture of concern, understanding and a hint of anger.

"Doctor, I've just checked the co-ordinates," she said, confronting the Time Lord. "Why are you taking me back to Pease Pottage?"

He sighed, rubbing his temples. "I have no choice, Mel. Dalmorth had a contact cube that is used by servants of the Black Guardian. I've defeated him twice in the past, and now he appears to be after me again."

"So?" she shrugged. "You've beaten the bad guys before; you can do it now."

"You don't understand; the Black Guardian is the ultimate source of chaos in the universe. You could take all of the evil we have fought, square it, cube it, multiply it to the hundredth power and you'd STILL fall short."

"All the more reason for me to stay; you'll need my help."

The Doctor rose, hands deep in his pockets. "No, Mel, and that's final! I haven't got the right to put you in that much danger." He left the chamber, Melanie protesting right behind him. They reached the console room just as the central column slowed to a halt. "But Doctor..."

He held up a hand. "No buts." A sad smile came to his face. "Maybe we'll meet again somewhen."

Melanie started to say something, stopped, and finally gave a reluctant nod. The Doctor operated the scanner and gave a start. A small groan escaped his lips at the sight of the fantastically-shaped trees that were shown on the screen.

"Look, I know you hate it when I point out the obvious," Melanie said, "but those don't look like anything I'VE ever seen near Pease Pottage."

"And she had been behaving so well lately," the Time Lord muttered angrily, running checks on the controls. "Confounded navigation."

Melanie looked at the environment readings. "Well, the atmosphere and climate are good; that's something at least. Shall we take a look 'round?" Getting no response, she gave an exasperated sniff and let herself out of the TARDIS. Oblivious to even this, the Doctor knelt down and opened a small panel in the base of the console, a scowl crossing his face as he looked inside.

"This is serious, Mel. Someone or something outside of the TARDIS altered the co-ordinates in mid-flight." He shuddered. "Why do I get the feeling that Gallifreyan technology is no longer state-of-the-art? I think we should wait a bit, Mel...MEL!" Seeing the open doors, he groaned inwardly. "Why does she always insist on doing these things?" Grabbing his hat and brolly, he left the TARDIS.

The ship had materialized in a small clearing in the alien forest. Melanie, much to the Doctor's relief, was kneeling nearby to examine a bizarre flower. Locking the TARDIS doors, he walked to his companion.

"It isn't wise to go wandering about on strange planets by yourself," he said, eyeing the surrounding foliage uneasily. "Anyway, I think we ought to stay in the immediate area, in case we need to return to the TARDIS in a hurry."

"Aren't we going to at least look around now that we're...well, wherever we are?"

The Doctor explained the altered co-ordinates to her. "So, someone WANTED us to land here," she finished. "The Black Guardian?"

Surprisingly, the Doctor shook his head. "Not exactly, Mel. You see, in the interest of universal equilibrium, there are two Guardians, both exactly equal in power and precisely opposite in motive; one is

pure evil, the other just as pure in goodness. If one of them were to directly interfere in something, the other would be compelled to intercede in a contrary manner in order to keep the cosmic balance."

"Oh, so the Black Guardian can't hurt us."

"Not personally, no. However..."

Melanie grimaced. "I KNEW there'd be a 'however'..."

"Such is life, Mel," he said with a small grin. "However, the Guardians have a 'loophole' of sorts. They can bequeath abilities and rewards to certain beings who serve them, such as Dalmorth. Those servants are then sent to do the Guardians' dirty work. One of these servants is probably what we're up against."

"Or maybe more than one," Melanie said quietly. The Doctor looked up; while they had been talking, three men had come up on them silently, and were now standing between them and the TARDIS. The men were all athletic and wore simply woven shirts and pants. They were apparently unarmed, and their faces were expressionless.

"Let me do the talking," the Time Lord whispered. Approaching the men, he doffed his hat. "Good evening, I'm the Doctor. Can we be of service to you?" There was no reply, so he tried again. "Can you understand me?"

One of the men, slightly taller than the others, stepped forward. "We comprehend your language, now. Please follow me." He indicated a path leading into the forest.

"Do you think we should?" Mel asked quietly.

"We might as well. Remember, we were brought here. I think we should get to the bottom of this." He turned to the men. "Lead on, MacDuff."

* * * * *

"The Doctor has landed. He is being taken to the village."

**EXCELLENT; ALL IS AS WAS FORESEEN. THE VILLAGERS
WILL DELIVER HIM AND HIS COMPANION INTO THE TRAP
VERY SOON. YOU HAVE DONE WELL SO FAR.**

"I live only to serve you, my master."

* * * * *

They were led through the woods to a small village composed of various-sized huts, apparently constructed with wood from the strange trees. Instructing them to wait outside, their guide went into the largest of the dwellings, set in the center of the community. The other two men disappeared amongst the various huts, leaving the visitors alone. Villagers, men, women and children, continued with their tasks, sparing only an occasional glance towards the strangers.

Melanie shivered. "Did you ever have the feeling that you're being watched?"

"We ARE being watched," the Doctor said. "See, look at the people."

"I mean, it's more than that; I feel as though they're looking right through me, like they could see into our minds."

The Doctor nodded slowly. "Yes, I see what you mean. Their stares DO seem rather intense."

The curtain covering the entrance to the hut was pushed aside, and their guide rejoined them. With him was an older man, looking about forty, with iron-gray hair and having an air of authority about him.

"Welcome," said the newcomer, addressing the Time Lord. "I am Ka-Dal, the leader of my people. This is Ta-Dem, my...successor, I believe, is the correct term in your tongue."

"I'm the Doctor, and this is Mel. I'm impressed; you've mastered English quite well."

"Languages are not difficult to understand once one has an adequate sample to work with."

"Still, it's an enviable talent."

Ka-Dal bowed modestly. "I thank you, Doctor. Come, you and your companion shall be my guests at our evening meal."

The two villagers led the Doctor and Melanie to a long, low structure. Inside, several tables filled one end of the building while large hearths and cooking fires occupied the other end. When they were seated, a gong rang out. Ka-Dal spoke a ritual blessing, and the meal, consisting of an herbal soup and high-protein fruits, began.

As he ate, the Doctor took the opportunity to glance around the dining hall; there were over a dozen tables, each capable of seating at least fifteen people, and yet there were barely two dozen villagers in attendance.

"I trust the food is adequate?" Ta-Dem asked conversationally.

"Quite good," agreed the Doctor. "Tell me though, why are there so few people here tonight? Don't all of you eat at the same time?"

The younger man glanced at his leader, who nodded. "We can trust him, Ta-Dem; the Kai-La has decreed that it is so."

"We are a people enslaved, Doctor," Ta-Dem began. "Our planet, Mercia, is a peaceful world and has, therefore, begotten a peaceful people. Visitors have come to our planet before, but as we possess nothing of value on Mercia, they have always departed without strife. But a short while ago, a ship landed near the Dead Mountain. The owner of the ship was a being who called himself Starlock, a man-machine of great power."

"Man-machine?" Melanie queried.

"Probably a robot or android," the Doctor said.

"Starlock came among my people, demanding slaves for some great task," Ka-Dal said, taking up the story. "When we refused to accede to his demands, he killed twelve of my people with beams of fire from his hands." The leader's eyes darkened. "One of those slain was my daughter, my only child."

"We had no choice but to agree," Ta-Dem continued. "Starlock threatened to kill more of us if we did not. He uses many of our people to build a giant machine in the Dead Mountain, keeping them imprisoned there."

Ka-Dal leaned forward. "Together, we could join to hurl an attack against his mind, but he uses a shield that we cannot penetrate. We do not have the knowledge to stop him, Doctor, but I believe that you do. Will you help us?"

The Time Lord rubbed his chin. "Do you know what this machine is that your people are being forced to build?"

"No; it is beyond our comprehension."

"We've GOT to help them," Melanie urged. "They're helpless against this Starlock."

"Are they?" the Doctor replied thoughtfully. "Can we be sure, Mel?"

She caught on; "The Black Guardian! You think this might be a trick?"

"That's the trouble with the Master of Deception; you can never really be sure of anything."

"You doubt us, Doctor," Ka-Dal stated rather than asked. "I sense a legitimate reason for this distrust, but I beg of you: we need your help!"

The Doctor hesitated again. Ta-Dem leaned over and whispered something to his leader, whose eyes widened. "An interesting solution, Ta-Dem, but we do not know what effect it would have on an alien mind."

"What?" Melanie asked.

The senior Mercian rose. "Come with me." Exchanging puzzled glances, the Doctor and Mel got up and followed Ka-Dal from the building, while Ta-Dem remained to finish his meal. He led them to the large central hut and indicated that they should enter. Inside, the building resembled the simple quarters of a monk or old-time priest: two low cots on either side of a multi-colored woven mat that led down the center to an altar against the back wall. Atop the altar was a stone statue of a pair of hands holding a large, multi-faceted gem.

"My home, Doctor, and that of Ta-Dem," Ka-Dal said. "And, the home of the Kai-La."

"Kai-La?"

The Mercian gestured to the statue. "You see its image before you."

"The gem?" asked Mel. Ka-Dal nodded.

"Well, whoever the artist was," the Time Lord said, "I'm impressed by his workmanship; those hands look almost alive."

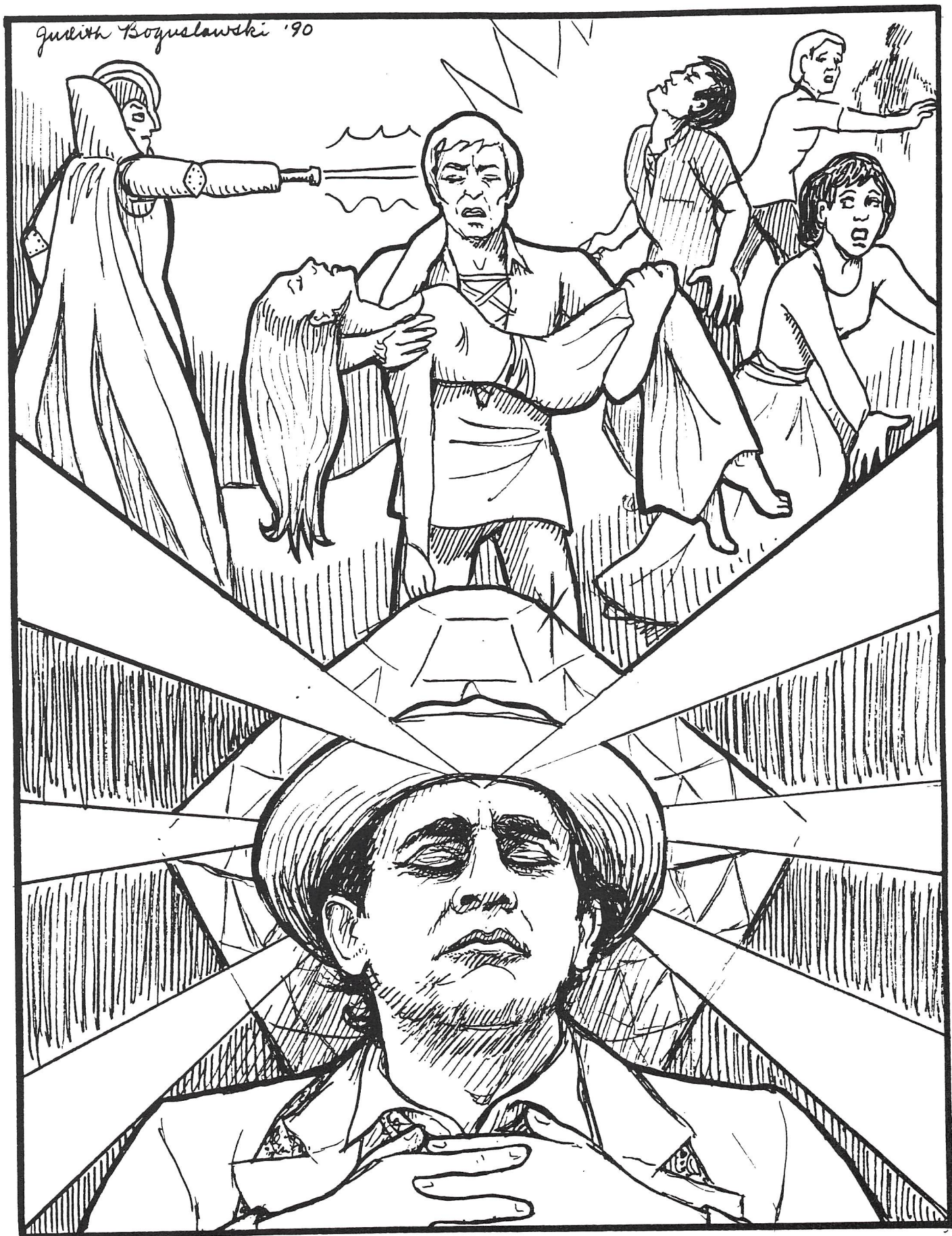
"There are many definitions of 'alive', Doctor," Ka-Dal said, kneeling before the altar. Closing his eyes, he lifted his arms towards the statue.

"What's he up to?" Melanie whispered.

"To be perfectly honest, I haven't the faintest idea. Some sort of religious ceremony, I think..."

"Doctor, look!"

The hands of the statue were moving gently up the sides of the stone jewel which, to the amazement of both visitors, remained suspended in mid-air. When they were halfway up, the fingers grasped the gem, and the hands slowly pulled apart. A brilliant, scintillating shaft of ruby red light erupted from the splitting gem, temporarily blinding the two travellers. When their vision cleared, the two hollow halves of the statue were



almost a foot apart, the hands still holding them in the air. Also suspended before them was what had been concealed inside: a huge, beautiful gemstone, with hundreds of glittering facets that shone with a deep, pulsating glow.

"Behold, Doctor," Ka-Dal said, rising. "The Kai-La!"

"It's beautiful," Mel murmured, almost hypnotized by the jewel.

"Utterly fascinating," agreed the Doctor. "And it's alive?"

"Most assuredly," the Mercian said, gazing lovingly at the gem. "It is the source of all that we are, Doctor. It gives us our strength of mind, our solutions and purpose when we are unsure."

"You mean, it can speak to you?" Melanie gasped.

"It...communicates to us, in our minds. It is our store of knowledge; when one of our people is near death, he or she is brought into physical contact with the Kai-La. That person then becomes one with the Kai-La, and their knowledge and experience remain with us after the bodily form is gone. Each facet of the Kai-La, Doctor, is one of our people."

Tearing his gaze from the gemstone, the Time Lord glanced at Ka-Dal. "So it acts as a sort of mentor or guru. But what does it have to do with us?"

"I cannot allow you to physically touch the Kai-La, but if you were to open your mind to it, you will see that we have told you nothing but the truth of our situation."

Alarms went off in Melanie's head. "Don't do it, Doctor; it could be a trap."

The Time Lord thought for a moment. Then he looked at the Mercian. "I accept."

"But, Doctor..."

"Mel, we're trapped on this planet, remember? If we try to leave, we'll just be brought back by whoever changed the co-ordinates before. In any case, I don't plan to spend the rest of my lives running from the Black Guardian. If this is his game, it's time I faced him." Receiving a reluctant nod from his companion, he turned back to Ka-Dal. "What must I do?"

The Mercian indicated a cot. "Please lie down, Doctor."

Melanie looked on apprehensively as the Time Lord settled himself on the cot. "Now, concentrate on the Kai-La; open your mind to its spirit."

The Doctor closed his eyes and tentatively sent out a mental probe towards the gem. Almost immediately, there was a response: a warm, gentle contact, a harmony of hundreds of voices.

Who are you, thought the Doctor.

We are the Kai-La. We are the wisdom of our people.

What is your purpose, Doctor?

I seek only the truth. My aid has been requested, but I am unsure of the motive.

We sense your dilemma, Doctor. See, now, the truth of the situation you find yourself in.

Images flashed through the Time Lord's mind: a starship landing near a hollow mountain--a volcano. Villager gathered around its base, and a ramp descended from the ship. A man walked down the ramp...but he was more machine than man; the arms and legs were large, cybernetic limbs, and a half-cowl covered one-half of his head. The man was speaking, demanding workers. The villagers refused...

The Doctor's body convulsed as scenes of horror and death flowed into his brain; the cyborg fired energy beams from a gun fixed to one arm. Mercians dropped, screaming, until one finally begged for mercy--it was Ka-Dal, holding the lifeless body of his daughter. The images faded from his mind.

You have seen our plight, Doctor; your help is desperately needed.

Yes, I understand.

Melanie sighed in relief as the Doctor opened his eyes and sat up. "Are you all right?" she asked.

"Yes, yes, I'm fine," he replied, rubbing his temples.

"What happened to you? You looked as though you were in pain."

"I WAS, Mel. Well, in a manner of speaking. I was seeing what happened to the Mercians when that ship landed. The pilot is a cyborg--half man, half machine."

"So, they were telling the truth. But can you be SURE?"

"Mel, the Black Guardian deals in lies, deceit and chaos. What I have just experienced was a truth so profound...I KNEW it was real!"

"Then, you WILL help us?" Ka-Dal asked, almost pleading.

"Yes, I will. But I will go ALONE to the ship."

"Doctor, you can't!" Melanie cried. "If that man, or whatever-it-is destroyed over a dozen people at once, you won't stand a chance by yourself!"

"Perhaps he will," the Mercian said thoughtfully. "One man can move with ease and secrecy where several could not. Very well, Doctor, we shall remain behind."

"But what can he do?" Melanie persisted.

"I shall do my utmost to reason with Starlock," the Time Lord said. He turned sternly to Ka-Dal. "I will attempt to deactivate the thought screen IF and ONLY if there is no peaceful alternative."

Ka-Dal bowed his head. "As you wish, Doctor. Come; Ta-Dem will take you to the mountain." They all headed for the door.

Stay, Melanie Bush.

Melanie stopped, looking for the source of the voice. It seemed to be inside her head.

Do not fear, Melanie. We are the Kai-La;
we mean you no harm.

The Kai-La? What do you want with me?

We sense great danger in store for the Doctor. His
abilities, alone, may not be enough for what lies
ahead. You must follow him.

Follow him? Why?

The path ahead is not clear, as it involves our own
future as well, but we sense a need for you to
be with him.

But what can I do?

As you are, now, you cannot aid him. We shall give
you what you need. Touch the Kai-La.

"She was right behind us a second ago," came the Doctor's voice as he and Ka-Dal re-entered the hut.
"There she...MEL, DON'T TOUCH IT!"

As they sprinted forward, Mel, in a trance, reached out and laid a hand on the glowing gemstone. A red aura, similar to the light of the Kai-La, enveloped her, physically repelling the two men. The light flared brilliantly and then vanished. Melanie lay still and silent on the floor of the hut.

The Doctor felt frantically for a pulse; it was there, but faint and erratic.

"She MUST have heard me warn you about physically contacting the Kai-La," the Mercian said agitatedly as their attempts to revive the girl failed.

"Will she be all right?"

"I do not know. No one has ever touched the Kai-La without becoming a part of it."

The Doctor felt her wrist again and gave a small sigh of relief. "Her pulse is stronger now; I think she'll pull through."

They laid Melanie on a cot, covering her with a blanket provided by Ka-Dal. "I will have one of the healers watch over her," the Mercian said. "I can do no more."

The Doctor nodded. "Thank you, Ka-Dal. Well, shall we find Ta-Dem?"

* * * * *

"He is on his way."

**ALL IS WELL. SOON, WE SHALL WITNESS THE HUMILIATION
AND DESTRUCTION OF THE DOCTOR.**

"What of his companion? She is necessary for the plan to succeed, yet she remains in the village."

**SHE WILL FOLLOW. HER IMPETUOUSNESS AND CONCERN FOR
THE TIME LORD ASSURES THAT SHE WILL GO AFTER HIM;
SHE IS NO THREAT.**

"Agreed; she is merely human. Once she is in our hands, the Doctor's fate is sealed."

* * * * *

Melanie slowly fought her way back to consciousness. Opening her eyes resulted in a fuzzy blur of images. Gradually, the images resolved themselves into the interior of Ka-Dal's hut. The Kai-La was once again concealed inside the statue.

The Kai-La. When she touched it, its presence had entered her mind in a gentle surge. Although she knew that the contact had been brief, it had seemed like an eternity. In that deceptively small space of time, the Kai-La had introduced her to a whole new world that she had never known existed. The mind, it had explained, tended to be cluttered and highly disorganized and, thus, rarely achieved its full potential. The Kai-La had then introduced order and logical structure into her mind, showing her how to create clear thought channels and the fundamentals of psionics: the science of the mind.

And before it had left her mind, the Kai-La had imparted a final message:

The Doctor's morality will not be enough to sustain him
in the crisis ahead. You must be there to act when
he cannot.

"You have awakened, Melanie," a voice said beside her. An elderly woman was sitting to one side of the cot. "Are you feeling well?"

"Yes, I'm fine. Where's the Doctor?"

"Your companion has gone to the Dead Mountain with Ta-Dem. He left but a short while ago."

"What?! But I MUST go with him!" Throwing aside the blanket, she got up and headed for the door. The woman scrambled after her, tugging at the girl's sleeve. "You must rest, child. You have been unwell."

"I tell you, I'm fine. Now, how do I get to this mountain?"

"The mountain? You cannot go there; you have not been well. Please, wait here and I will fetch Ka-Dal."

"I can't wait! The Doctor is in danger! Now, tell me how to get to that mountain!"

* * * * *

"That is the entrance," Ta-Dem said, gesturing to a large cave opening in the mountainside. "Inside the Dead Mountain is the man-thing, Starlock, and the vile machine he has forced our people to build."

"Yes, an extinct volcano," mused the Doctor. "I wonder if his choice of habitation was merely fortuitous or intentional."

"I do not know, but I cannot go further, Doctor. Good luck." With that, the Mercian disappeared into the forest.

"Will you come into my pantry," he said absently, looking at the forbidding hole. "Why not?" Flipping his brolly over one shoulder, he strolled into the cave. A grim silence settled over the area.

After a while, the sound of hurried footfalls broke the silence, and Melanie came running out of the forest. Leaning against a tree to catch her breath, she eyed the entrance apprehensively. Steeling herself, she quietly entered the cave.

Inside, the cave narrowed to a low tunnel, twisting through the mountain. Stumbling in the dark, Melanie steadied herself against one wall, peering into the gloom. "Doctor? Doctor, where are you?"

Something flew at her through the dark, and before she could react, she found herself caught in a large, metallic net. There was a burst of pain as the net crackled with energy, and Melanie slumped to the ground. A large shape looked from the shadows as a dark, evil laugh filled the tunnel.

"And now, Doctor, your doom is assured."

* * * * *

The tunnel opened onto a ledge on the inside of the volcano's crater. A roughly-hewn path led down to the huge bowl where a massive machine was set into the floor of the volcano. The space ship straddled the machine: a large, rounded body sitting atop three legs, like a camera on a tripod. A shaft led from the underside of the ship's belly to the construction below. Producing a spyglass from one pocket, the Doctor examined the machine, giving a long whistle.

"It's a giant hyperspatial generator," he muttered. "It could shove this entire planet through hyperspace, and it looks completed." Replacing his telescope, he began to pick his way carefully down the path.

After a long hike, the Doctor reached the central shaft, which had a door set into it. As he approached, the door slid open to reveal a lift, featureless save for two small buttons set one over the other. Shrugging, he pressed the lower button; there was no response, causing the Time Lord to raise an eyebrow.

"One way only, hmm?" he murmured. He pressed the other button; the door slid shut, and the lift ascended.

Although the shaft was several dozen meters high, it was only a few seconds before the lift stopped and the door slid open. The Doctor stepped out into a huge, empty storage bay with a human-sized door at the far end. A fairly simple ship, thought the Doctor as he walked to the other exit. Basically a two-section interior: a storage bay and a bridge.

Opening the other door proved him right; the bridge of the ship was roughly half-moon with computer banks and machinery lining every wall, except for a tall, metal panel on his left. At the front of the bridge was a large viewscreen, divided into two halves. In front of the screen was a tall, irregularly shaped machine.

"And now," the Doctor said, rubbing his hands together, "let's see if I can figure out what this Starlock is up to with a planet-sized hyperspatial generator."

"There is no need, Time Lord," came a deep, harsh voice. The Doctor took a startled step back as the oddly-shaped 'machine' turned. "I will gladly tell you what you wish to know."

Recovering his composure, the Doctor eyed the menacing form of the cyborg: a full two meters high, dressed in a loose tunic-like garment with a long cape attached at a high, rounded collar. His arms and legs glinted in the low light of the bridge, each a cybernetic replacement of a flexible alloy. A metallic half-cowl covered the left side of his face, and the nozzle of a gun was fitted to the right arm. "Starlock, I presume," the Time Lord said.

"I have been waiting for you," the man-machine said, smiling ominously. "My destiny draws near, Doctor, as does yours."

"Does it, indeed? Well then, perhaps you could answer a few questions before it graces us with its presence, hmm?"

"Of course; you are curious as to myself, my purpose here, and the purpose of the generator below us, are you not?"

"Well, that DOES sum it up rather nicely..."

"The name I was once know as is Sterling Harlock, expert in the fields of physics, thermodynamics and, of course, cybernetics."

"Of course!" the Doctor cried. "You're from Earth!" The Time Lord's voice grew harsh. "You were convicted for murder and unethical experimentation on human subjects, including children. You escaped execution, though, and were never heard from again."

"There is nothing unethical in the quest for scientific enlightenment, Doctor. I needed human subjects for cybernetic testings; such is the cost of advancement."

"You destroyed over two dozen lives! They were forced into your obscene experiments against their wills!"

"Enough!" the cyborg roared. "All true science involves risks. My theories were accurate, and I soon perfected the techniques after I left Earth, as you can see for yourself." He flexed an arm. "Every bone, muscle and nerve has been perfectly replicated in a materials far more durable and powerful than mere flesh. Surely such an advance is worth a few meaningless lives."

"Is that why you're here?" the Time Lord said angrily. "To use the Mercians as guinea pigs for more of your experiments?"

"Oh, no, Doctor!" Starlock said menacingly. "My primary purpose here is revenge: revenge on the planet that dared to try and execute me!"

The Doctor's blood ran cold. "What do you mean?"

"As you have no doubt noticed, the generator below is powerful enough to send this entire planet through hyperspace, and I intend to do just that. This planet will exit the hyperspace tube precisely one light year from the Earth, on a direct collision course!"

"No!! You'll be destroying millions of innocent lives! No matter what happened to you in the past, you have no right to destroy two entire planets for petty revenge!"

"Two planets, Doctor? You underestimate me; what I have in mind is rather-reaching than that. Tell me, do you know what period of time this is in Earth's history?"

"No, but I'm sure you'll delight in telling me."

"They year is 2540. Does that mean anything to you?"

The Doctor stared at Starlock as realization hit him. "The Earth-Draconian cold war! At this point in time, tensions will be at their height..."

"And when their homeworld is deliberately destroyed," the cyborg finished, "all of the Earth colonies and fleets will blame Draconia, and a full-scale intergalactic war will begin!"

Horried, the Doctor backed away towards a small, complex machine near one wall that he had recognized: the generator for Starlock's thought screen. "You can't do this--it's insane!"

Starlock threw back his head and laughed harshly. "Will you try to stop me, Time Lord? Feel free to deactivate the thought shield generator that you are so 'cleverly' edging towards." He gestured to a large control panel nearby. "Or, better yet, why not stop the hyperspace generator, which is already counting down to activation? Please, be my guest."

The Doctor stopped in his tracks. "Why? What's the catch?"

Smiling maliciously, Starlock pressed a button on a nearby console. The tall panel that the Doctor had noticed earlier slid aside to reveal a transparent cylinder. Inside, shackled to one side, was...

"Mel!!" The Time Lord turned on the cyborg. "What have you done to her?"

"Done?" Starlock said innocently. "All I have done is imprisoned her for trespassing in my tunnel. However, I should point out that both the thought shield generator and the controls for the hyperspatial generator are wired to the cubicle. Should either be tampered with in any way, a quite lethal charge of lazon energy will be sent through your young friend."

"Don't worry about me, Doctor!" Melanie shouted, straining at the short chains. "Turn off the thought shield!"

"Perhaps you should take your young companion's advice," the cyborg said mockingly as the Doctor stood frozen, fists clenched helplessly. "After all, what is her life when compared to the millions that will die if you do not stop me."

"Doctor, please! Do it!"

"I...I can't!" he cried in anguish. "If I did, I'd kill you!" He faced Starlock. "Why don't you just destroy me and leave her alone? Why are you doing this?"

"For the glory of the one I serve, Time Lord," the cyborg said. "For my master, to whom destruction and cries of misery and death are the sweetest of music!" He extended a gauntleted hand, revealing a crystalline cube pulsing with a hideous light.

"For my Guardian, Doctor!"

The shadows on the bridge seemed to flow together, coalescing into a dark figure radiating evil and hatred in an almost physical wave. Its face was twisted and leering as it solidified beside Starlock.

The Black Guardian of Time.

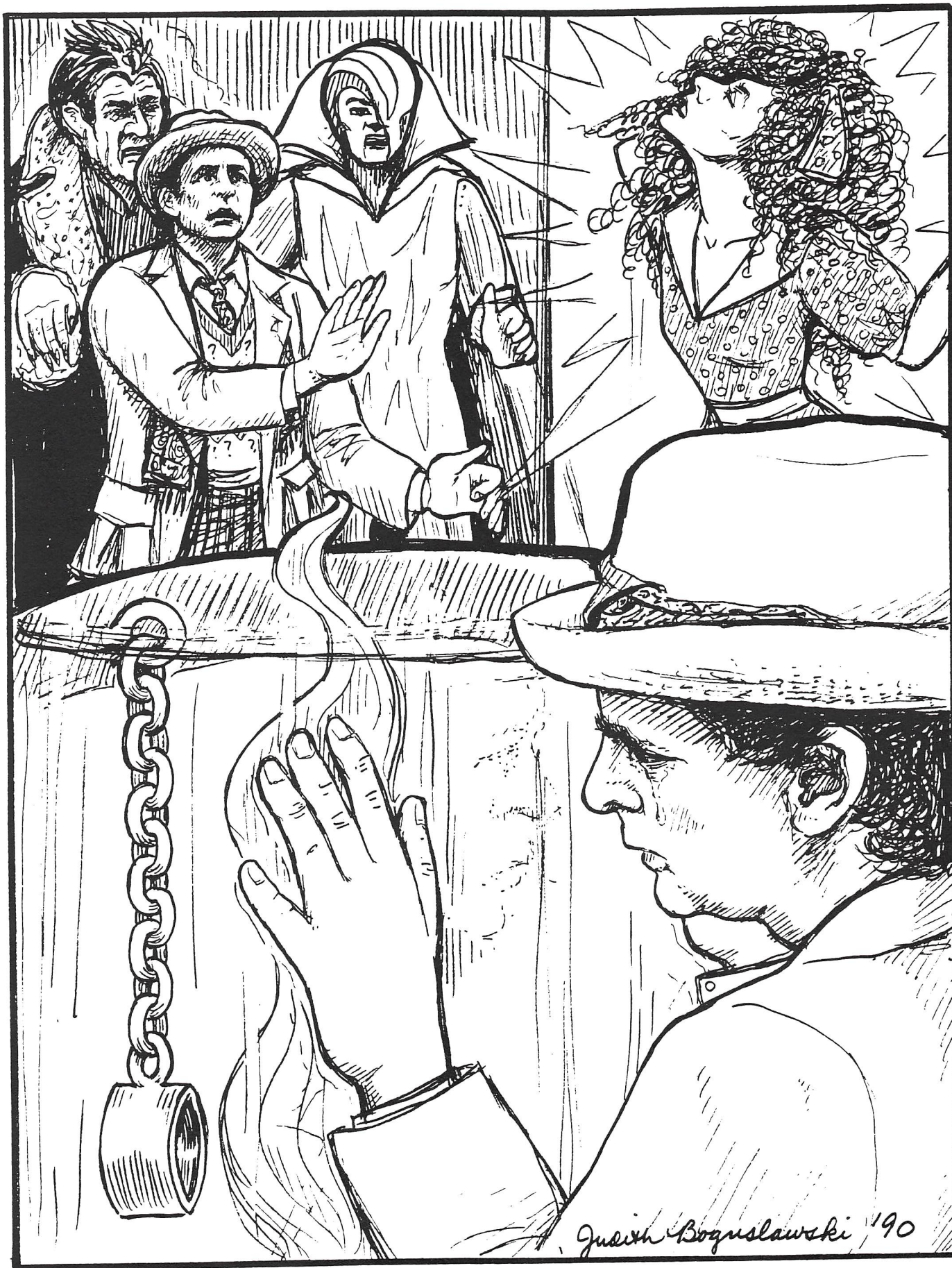
"**ALL TOO OFTEN, DOCTOR, YOU HAVE INTERFERED IN THE CAUSES OF DARKNESS,**" the spectre said in a voice of thunder. "**NOW, YOU WILL CHOOSE: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GALAXY OR THE DESTRUCTION OF YOUR COMPANION.**"

"Doctor, you must stop them!" Melanie cried as the Time Lord slumped against the bridge door, shaking his head. "I can't," he moaned. "I can't kill her!"

And he can't, Mel thought miserably. She knew he could not bring himself to end her life, no matter the cost otherwise. He was trapped in a moral impasse because of her, and she could not help him.

The Doctor's morality will not be enough to sustain him
in the crisis ahead. You must be there to act when
he cannot.

The parting message of the Kai-La echoed in her mind as the ship began to shake; the countdown was nearing its end.



"You have little time, Doctor," Starlock taunted. "Will you stand by idly and do nothing?" He pointed at a large red lever on the control panel. "All you need do is pull that switch, and the Earth and its galaxy will be safe."

Melanie looked at the lever, a simple, sliding vertical control, but the Doctor remained paralyzed with his indecision.

You must be there to act when he cannot.

The Kai-La had known, somehow; it had given her what she now needed. Closing her eyes, Melanie cleared a thought channel and directed it at the lever.

The Black Guardian seemed to stiffen, and it turned, face livid with fury. **"THE GIRL!"** it roared. **"STOP THE GIRL!"**

"Goodbye, Doctor!" Melanie sobbed, sending a burst of mental energy at the control. With a small click, the lever slid downwards, and the control panel exploded.

"NOOOO!!!" yelled the Doctor.

The cylinder crackled as lazon beams raked through it. Mel screamed in agony as her every cell was disrupted, and her body burst into flames before the horror-stricken eyes of the Doctor.

"MELLLLL!!!"

The freighter exploded in a searing flash as the anti-matter vessel disintegrated...

With a final screech, what had been Melanie Bush crumpled to the floor of the cylinder, charred and unrecognizable. The Doctor pounded on the cubicle, his body racked with grief.

"It can't be..." Starlock said, dazed. "How...?"

Almost blinded with tears, the Doctor spun and lurched towards the thought shield generator. Before the cyborg could react, the Time Lord ripped the machine from its place, snapping the wires that connected it to the ship's power source. Starlock took one step towards the Doctor but froze as the combined power of the Mercians struck his mind. Uttering a strangled gasp, Starlock stumbled, collapsed to his knees and fell to the floor, his brain destroyed.

The Black Guardian hovered over the Doctor, its hands spread like a vulture's claws. **"I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED AGAIN, TIME LORD! THIS TIME, YOUR LIFE WILL BE FORFEIT!"** The Doctor made no effort to defend himself as the Guardian hurled a massive cone of energy at him.

But the attack dissipated scant inches from his body. The bridge of Starlock's ship seemed to blur and shift until the Doctor found himself floating in a gray, featureless void. He looked up to see a kindly, elderly man in flowing white robes beside him.

"The White Guardian!" he gasped.

"LEAVE US!" ordered the evil spectre. **"THE DOCTOR IS MINE; YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO INTERFERE!"**

The White Guardian stepped forward. "THE TIME HAS COME, AS I HAVE FORESEEN; THE HATRED AND EVIL THAT IS YOUR BEING HAS CONSUMED YOU TO THE POINT OF IGNORING THE LAWS OF GUARDIANSHIP. THE UNIVERSE HAS MATURED, AND THE TIME OF THE GUARDIANS IS PAST; WE ARE NO LONGER NEEDED." He laid a hand on the Doctor's shoulder...

...and the Doctor's mind was one with the Guardian's. "WE MUST DIRECT OUR MINDS AGAINST HIS DEFENSES," instructed the White Guardian. "WERE I ALONE, IT WOULD BE A POINTLESS STALEMATE, BUT YOU, DOCTOR, SHALL TIP THE SCALES."

With that, they launched a massive mental assault against the stupendous mind of the Black Guardian; the White Guardian with the wisdom and strength of the untold ages, and the Doctor with the pain, grief and anger of Melanie's loss. Relentlessly he bored at the barrier that the evil Guardian had erected. Sensing this, his opponent attempted to counter but was unable to divert any of his attention from his opposite's constant barrage. Slowly but surely, channeling his mind energies into a single, controlled probe, the Doctor drilled through the Guardian's mental defenses. As he did so, he sensed in the mind of the evil one something he had never experienced before in his battles against the Guardian: fear.

"YOU...CANNOT...DESTROY...ME!" came the mental voice of the Black Guardian, faint, strained and terrified. **"YOU...WILL DESTROY...YOURSELF...AS WELL!"**

"THE UNIVERSE HAS NO FURTHER NEED OF THE GUARDIANS OF TIME," answered the White Guardian, still calm and strong. "I HAVE FORESEEN AND ACCEPTED THIS FATE; EVIL NEVER ACCEPTS ITS END."

The evil Guardian's defenses collapsed, leaving his mind open to attack. In the titanic conflict that

followed, the very plane that the occupied seethed and boiled in the wake of the colossal energies being released. Slowly, inexorably, his mind weakened until, finally, the very core of his being lay exposed.

"DESTROY HIS EXISTENCE!" ordered the White Guardian. "ATTACK WITH ALL THE THOUGHTS OF GOODNESS AND KINDNESS YOU CAN MUSTER--EXTINGUISH HIS BEING!"

And the Doctor did, hurling his every iota of mind power into a thrust of love, hope and all that was good. The thing that was the Black Guardian, unable to divert any power from the ceaseless assault by his twin, dispersed in a hellish release of mental energy. As the Guardian died, the Time Lord felt his mind being ejected from its symbiosis with the White Guardian. There was a sickening, wrenching sensation...

...and he was back in the TARDIS, cradling the now limp and fragile body of the White Guardian. Still disoriented, he looked blearily around the console room until his gaze fell on a familiar form lying nearby.

"Mel!"

Melanie stirred, groaned and sat up. As she took stock of her surroundings, a bewildered expression came to her face. "The TARDIS?" she stammered. "But how...?"

"IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO," came the faint voice of the White Guardian, smiling weakly at the Time Lord. "IN THE MINUTE INSTANCE BETWEEN THE BLACK GUARDIAN'S DESTRUCTION AND THE BACKLASH THAT HAS TAKEN MY VIRILITY, I DID THE ONE THING I COULD WITH WHAT POWER WAS LEFT TO ME...TO THANK YOU, DOCTOR." The Time Lord was at a loss for words.

"IN THE MILLENNIA THAT YOU HAVE FOUGHT THE ARMIES OF DARKNESS, YOU HAVE PROVEN TO BE MY BEST AGENT. IN TRUTH, IT IS ONLY THE PRESENCE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR COMPANION THAT ALLOWS ME THESE FEW FINAL MOMENTS."

"But why?" the Doctor asked. "Why commit suicide? Surely you didn't mean what you said about being unnecessary?"

"I SPOKE THE TRUTH," replied the Guardian, who in front of their eyes was literally fading away. "THE UNIVERSE HAS GROWN UP, DOCTOR, AND IS PAST THE NEED FOR ITS GUARDIANS. I FORESAW THIS; SO DID THE BLACK GUARDIAN, BUT, AS WITH ALL WHO ARE EVIL, HE COULD NOT ACCEPT THE SITUATION AND TRIED TO ALTER IT."

"But what of the forces of good?" Mel asked. "Will they be able to go on?"

"I HAVE FORESEEN A TIME WHEN THE ARMIES OF LIGHT WILL FINALLY DOMINATE THE UNIVERSE," the Guardian said, now no more than a disembodied voice. "UNFORTUNATELY, DOCTOR, I AM AFRAID THAT YOU WILL NOT LIVE TO SEE SUCH A TIME, BUT IT WILL ONLY COME ABOUT THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS LIKE YOU IN THE COMING AGES."

The voice was almost inaudible now, and the Doctor and Melanie had to strain to hear it: "BUT BE EVER ALERT, DOCTOR, FOR IF THE FORCES OF LIGHT SHOULD EVER RELAX THEIR VIGILANCE, THE ACOLYTES OF DARKNESS COULD QUITE POSSIBLY REIGN SUPREME INSTEAD."

The voice faded away, and a slight wind washed through the console room; the White Guardian of Time and Space was gone.

"Are they really gone?" Melanie asked, getting to her feet. "Forever?"

"Yes," the Doctor answered. He rose and grasped her shoulders, fighting back tears of relief. "Mel, that was a foolish thing to do. You do realize what happened?"

"I do, but I HAD to. The Kai-La gave me those powers because it knew, somehow, that you would be unable to act on your own."

"Do you still have them?"

Melanie concentrated on the scanner control, but even as she did she knew the answer. "No, the power's gone." She smiled. "Fair exchange for a second chance on life, though. And speaking of second chances, shouldn't we let the Mercian prisoners know that they're free?"

"They're telepathic, Mel; they already know by now. But they may need help getting out of whatever prison they're being held in."

The Doctor opened the doors and brushed himself off. Mel walked towards the exit but stopped in front of the Time Lord. "Just one thing: why did the White Guardian say that you have fought evil for millennia?"

"Well, 900 years is close enough to a millennium, and it's a lot easier to say one word..."

"Not millennium, Doctor," she interrupted. "Millennia, as in plural."

"Mel, the Guardian was dying. He was an old man, and old men can be a little unclear. Now, shall we go check on the Mercians?"

Melanie gave the Time Lord a steady look, easily translatable: 'this isn't over yet'. Then she turned and walked out of the TARDIS. The Doctor scowled after her affectionately; sometimes, that girl's ability for total recall could be so troublesome. He raised his eyes towards the ceiling.

"And some old men," he said with a small smile, "tend to talk too much."





I seek the truth

My truth is among the stars

That is what I tell them, sometimes

When they ask why

I don't always feel like giving them an answer

In my darker moods I wonder about it myself

*Tis no easy task I have chosen, my endless crusade
Attempting to right the wrongs of our chaotic universe*

Maybe that is the reason my people have closed their eyes to it

I couldn't close my eyes

*For that I was branded a renegade
I would be lying if I said it didn't hurt*

My life would have been so much simpler had I remained on Gallifrey

*I smile sadly, knowing I no longer have a place on Gallifrey,
wondering if I ever did*

*I belong where the Time Winds carry me
That is my truth*

*I wish my people understood
I wish it more for their sake than my own*

Julia Jay

SAVE ME
(to Fleetwood Mac's "Hold Me")
by Roxie Ray

Can you really hear me?
Doctor I'm in trouble again.
Fallen over a cliff's edge
That I didn't notice at all.

You've saved me from danger
Only to have me taken once more.
Oh and I think I may be sacrificed,
You must muse, "What's a companion for?"

Save me
Save me
Save me
Save me

Been hit over the head;
I chanced upon an evil plan.
I may be left for dead,
Wish you'd help if you can.

Got Daleks chasing after me
Also a Sontaran or two.
I suppose you're quite right--
I should start listening to you.

Save me
Save me
Save me
Save me

Oh please...save me
Save me
Save me
Save me

Oh please...save me
Save me
Save me
Save me



THE SUBSTITUTES

Jeff Morris

This, Janine Melnitz sighed as she trudged out of the subway kiosk up into the grubby dawn of New York City, was going to be one of those very bad days. She was utterly sure about it.

Bad enough that she'd overslept; the last week or so, it seemed that no matter how much rest she'd gotten, it wasn't nearly enough. She felt utterly wretched upon finally rising, and still felt a bit like death warmed over--perhaps she'd caught a bug going around--but that didn't matter. Dr. Peter Venkman wouldn't accept any excuse short of death (her own) for missing work, and he'd probably make her work past closing time as punishment for coming in late. "Damn slave driver," she muttered to herself as she crossed 123rd Avenue.

Three blocks later, she'd finally reached the aging firehouse that served as Ghostbusters Central. Janine struggled with her purse, trying to retrieve her office keys and hold onto her tote bag simultaneously--and failed utterly as everything tumbled to the sidewalk. Cursing under her breath, she scooped her belongings up and, unlocking the door, stepped inside.

Janine immediately sensed that something was very wrong. She glanced around the dark confines, straining to see any of her employers stumbling about, but upon noting the unplugged coffee pot abandoned that tactic. Sighing uneasily, she walked briskly to her desk, set down her purse and bag, then moved to the light switches and slammed them all on with a flick of her wrist. Still no one in sight.

There was no note to indicate any trouble, and ECTO-1 sat sleeping in its accustomed place. She could feel the containment unit's steady vibration from the basement, but the unnatural silence of the firehouse continued to bother her. She hurried up the stairwell, her heels clacking crisply on the wood steps.

More trouble on the second level--the kitchen and dining room showed no evidence of recent use. The rec room was about as reasonably tidy as one would expect from four bachelors. But still the silence reigned. It was all Janine could do to keep from screaming, just to break that awful stillness.

She quickly went to the sleeping quarters on the third floor, and noticeably relaxed at the sounds of life behind the giant oak door that barred her way. She knocked solidly three times and cleared her throat. "Guys? You okay?"

The door creaked open just slightly; a very pale Egon Spengler peered tiredly through the opening. "Not really, Janine."

"Egon, you look awful!" she exclaimed, pushing her way through despite his best efforts to block her. "What's wrong?" She raised a hand to his brow and gasped. "You're so hot! What's your temperature? How about the other guys?"

"I don't know," Egon replied miserably. "We can't find a thermometer." Behind her beloved scientist, Janine could see that Winston, Peter and Ray were lying in bed groaning and moaning. "We seem to have picked up a virus," Egon concluded.

"You're not kidding! Go lie down, Egon. I'm calling the doctor."

Dr. Leah Rosenthal sighed and put away the tools of her trade. "How many times have I warned the four of you about the disadvantages of communal living? You've all got a classic case of mono, and I'm guessing it's going to be a few weeks before you're going to be up and around." She handed Janine a fistful of prescriptions. "Get these filled, Janine, and make sure they stay in bed, get plenty of fluids, and cancel their workload for the next two weeks. They've got to get some rest."

"Oboy," Janine sighed sadly after the physician had left. "That's not going to be easy. You guys are booked solid until Christmas."

"Just give me a minute or two," Ray Stanz groaned. "I can work--I think."

"Count me out," Winston Zeddemore shook his head. "I think standing's out of the question, much less ghostbusting."

"But we can't cancel!" Peter Venkman whined from his bed, wincing as his sore throat protested this harsh treatment. "We've got all those bills to pay--including that stuff Egon purchased a few weeks ago! We need the money!"

"Well, you guys sure can't do anything," Janine noted thoughtfully as she tucked Egon in. "But maybe...tell you what, guys. I've got an idea. Let me make a phone call and see if I can't get some temporary help."

"Oh sure," Ray shook his head. "Get some novices to take over? They'll destroy the city!"

"I'll go with them," Janine soothed as she poured him a glass of ice water. "Here, take your medication."

"I hate to ask this," Peter mumbled from his pillow. "But who you gonna call?"

Janine smiled...

* * * * *

A light snow was falling in New Brunswick, adding a new layer of white magic to an already-buried city. At the Banzai Institute, this event was triggering great cheers and renewed snowball fights as interns and apprentices took early leave of their duties for a much-needed break. A few of the residents were sitting in the Bunkhouse (the site of the Hong Kong Cavaliers' considerable computer resources and musical instruments) busy untangling Christmas tree lights and checking the antique ornaments in anticipation of the annual Tree Decoration in four days. Others were sampling some of Comanche's holiday baking. And one Cavalier was considering the notion of jumping off the nearest bridge.

Nightowl shoved his reading glasses back into place and stared despondently at the computer terminal screen, which listed in green-and-white detail his current financial status--or lack thereof. How could his wife spend so much money on one child? He was utterly, completely, dead-flat broke--with Christmas only three weeks away.

His options were few. There was the possibility of getting an advance on his stipend, but that only delayed his troubles. Besides, he'd have to get Rawhide to approve it, and the burly Cavalier took a dim view of that practice. Rumors that the big man threw nickels around as if they were manhole covers had more than a bit of fact to back them up. There was the option of getting some outside work--he could call a few record companies and see if anyone needed some last-minute help with an album...but no, that would probably take him out to California, and he wanted to stay close to home during the holidays.

He was considering the notion of male prostitution when Little Red, the Institute's chief nurse, came into the Bunkhouse and cleared her throat. The seven people in the room glanced up expectantly. "I just got a call from my cousin Janine," she announced. "The Ghostbusters are under the weather and can't work for two weeks. She's looking for people to fill in until they're better. Any takers?"

"You gotta be kidding," Reno Nevada grinned. "Who in their right mind would take a job with long hours, hazardous duty, and constant weirdness?"

"We get enough of that here," Billy Travers added.

"They're willing to pay a 10% bounty on each ghost caught," Red continued. Nightowl's eyes widened slightly as his mind raced: average cost was \$600, if memory served. Average of ten ghosts per day for fourteen days..."And Janine's willing to go out with you and show you the ropes."

"Count me in," Nightowl declared, firmly switching off the PC. Red nodded and wrote his name down on a clipboard she was carrying. "Okay, that's one. Anybody else?"

"Me too," Perfect Tommy announced.

"Oh NO!" Red declared to her favorite lust-object. "I'm not going to sit around here wondering how you've killed yourself this time! No WAY!"

"It's cool, Red." Tommy unleashed his patented killer smile, the one that no woman, not even a redhead, could resist. Red melted under its intensity. "Well..." she reluctantly nodded. "All right, but I'll tag along. Janine will need someone to look after the four of them while she's out."

"I'm interested, Red." Everyone turned to find none other than Buckaroo Banzai himself standing in the doorway. "I've always wanted to conduct some hands-on research into the world of the paranormal..."

"...and you've been dying to get a peek at Dr. Spengler's toys," Mrs. Johnson finished for him curtly. "Buckaroo, just because you've got a clear schedule for a change doesn't mean you have to fill it!"

"Nonsense," the cool leader of the Cavaliers replied calmly. "The Ghostbusters are friends. If they need our assistance, we should give it. I just want to do my share."

"Bull," Mrs. Johnson muttered under her breath. "You just want to play with those proton packs. All

right," she sighed. "I'll finish clearing your schedule, and man their phones while Janine's taking you guys out. But you'd better be careful, got me?"

"Understood," Buckaroo smiled. "Red, when do they need us?"

"About two hours ago."

"Then we'd best be moving, hadn't we?"

* * * * *

Upon arriving at the firehouse, Little Red immediately took charge of the third floor and its patients--much to their terror, for they'd heard about the fiesty nurse and her ways of guaranteeing patient cooperation. Janine gave Mrs. Johnson a quick run-through with the phones and the computer billing system, then gazed critically at her three charges. They were dressed in Institute coveralls--Perfect Tommy's appeared to be tailored for tightness in all the right places, Nightowl was in his beloved black with silver trim, and Buckaroo's appeared to have never been washed. Janine glanced down at her own immaculately-clean purple-and-blue-trim outfit and shook her head. "We're all gonna die," she murmured.

Wiping a sheen of sweat from her forehead, Janine sighed and motioned towards ECTO-1. "Well, let's get rolling." They piled in, with Buckaroo taking the front passenger seat, Tommy and Nightowl the back seats, and Janine behind the wheel. "Okay, here's the list of clients for today. I've got the proton packs and traps in back, and there're a few PKE meters for you, too. I'll show you how to use 'em when we get to..." She studied the list. "...uh, the Lea Dye Factory." Sighing, she revved up the car and pressed the automatic door opener. "Let's roll!"

"Thank goodness you've come!" exclaimed the shift manager as he ran up to ECTO-1. "It's in the vat storage area, and causing all sorts of..." His voice trailed off as he stared at the four strangers emerging from the converted hearse. "You're not the Ghostbusters!"

"Sure we are," Janine declared as she shoved a clipboard into the manager's hands. "And soon as you sign this release, we'll get to work. These guys are helping out during the Christmas rush. You got any complaints?"

"Are they experienced?" the man's voice quavered nervously as he scribbled his signature on the paper.

"Oh, yeah--real pros, believe you me." Just then Tommy dropped a trap and yelped as it hit his foot. Nightowl was wincing at the weight of his pack, and Buckaroo was intently studying the PKE meter he was holding upside down. "No problem at all," she sighed. "Where's the storage area?"

"Quiet in here," Nightowl remarked, gripping his particle thrower tightly. Their footsteps echoed hauntingly throughout the metal facility, rebounding off the towering drums that surrounded them. Even with the lights on, the place oozed shadows, setting already tight nerves further on edge.

"Don't worry, it'll get loud soon enough," Janine assured him, wiping the sweat from her brow. "God, it's hot in here."

Buckaroo eyed her oddly, but her attention was diverted by two spindles extending from the PKE meter. "Janine, what does this mean?"

"It means...IT'S SHOWTIME!" From the rafters swooped a hideous phantasm, dripping with ecoplasmic slime. Janine's reflexes shot into action; a rainbow of energy exploded from her particle thrower and zinged just past the creature before slamming into the ceiling. "Separate!" she bellowed. "Form a circle! Get into position and fire--BUT DON'T CROSS THE STREAMS!"

"How the hell do we know if we're crossing the streams?" Tommy cried as he ran across the room.

"Don't worry--you do it once, you'll never have to worry about doing it again!" Janine waved Buckaroo and Nightowl into position, then screamed, "FIRE!"

There is one thing to remember about using a particle thrower--the things release a great deal of energy when activated. Therefore, there is a considerable recoil involved. The Ghostbusters were well aware of this and always braced themselves before firing.

Three particle throwers flared into life. Three streams shot into the air--straight up, because all three Cavaliers were thrown flat on their backs from the kick of the throwers. The creature cackled insanely and swooped around in derision, then abruptly dove towards Buckaroo, who was at the moment flailing about like a turtle on its back.

"I can't get up! Someone do something! I can't...AAAAHHHHHGGGG!" There was a nasty 'squishing' noise, and when the ghost soared to the ceiling, a thoroughly-slimed Buckaroo Banzai now lay on the floor. "Ugh," he sputtered, trying with no success to wipe the goo off his face.

By this time Tommy and Nightowl (who had correctly rolled onto their sides to get up) were back on their feet and taking aim at the ugly apparition. Their neutrona blasts snagged the writhing creature and held it in place. "Banzai--throw a trap!" Janine cried, hoping to let them learn with practice. Unfortunately, the frazzled neurosurgeon threw the device too hard, and it skittered across the floor before winding up on its side, well away from the ghost.

"Oh, for heaven's sake..." With one cool, practiced motion, Janine grabbed a trap, slid it across the floor, and slammed her foot upon the activator petal. A nimbus of bright, unearthly light shot into the air, bathing the ghost in its aura. Nightowl and Tommy shut their throwers down; the creature screamed once before it was sucked into the trap, which then snapped shut and beeped contentedly to itself.

Perfect Tommy gazed at the smoking device and tapped it cautiously with his boot, jumping back as a crackle of energy flickered around it. Janine grabbed the trap by its connection hose and hefted it up. "And that's how you do it. Any questions?"

Buckaroo sighed and flicked his arm, sending a greenish, snot-like missile into the air. "Is there any way to get this stuff off?" he asked plaintively.

* * * * *

"There he is!" Tommy yelled, punctuating his warning with a blast that sent the hideous spectre flying...right into the tendrils of Buckaroo's fire. The creature flailed helplessly about, unable to free itself from the energy net. But it did not have to worry about such predicaments for long; Nightowl rolled a trap into place and activated it. Seconds later, the ghost was gone.

"Awright," Tommy grinned, giving Nightowl a 'high-five'.

"I think we've the hang of it now," Buckaroo remarked to Janine, who had collapsed into a nearby office chair. "Are you all right?"

"Huh?" She blinked rapidly at the doctor. "Oh yeah, fine. Just tired, that's all. Yeah, you guys did good this time. Of course, this was our sixth call." She whipped out a bill pad and scribbled down the details. "Here you go, Mr. Calloway," she smiled as she handed the paper to a thin balding man who was still covering under the desk beside her. "We accept cash, checks, and most major credit cards. If you don't pay in thirty days, though, we bring the ghost back, with a few others as penalty charges. Have a nice day."

"Is that it for today?" Nightowl asked wistfully as he helped Janine out of her pack. "My back is killing me."

"I think so," she nodded, stretching and yawning as she spoke. "Let's get back. I want to see how Egon is doing. Buckaroo, you wanna drive?"

"All right," he replied after a second; his eyes were studying the weary receptionist intently. "That might be a good idea." The drive back to the firehouse was relatively silent, punctuated only by the occasional snore from Janine, who was sound asleep and cuddled up against Tommy's shoulder.

"How'd it go, guys?" Mrs. Johnson asked when they returned. Nightowl smiled tiredly, holding up a gaggle of smoking traps as he headed for the basement. Tommy was trying to carefully extricate Janine from both his shoulder and the car. "Buckaroo, is she okay?"

"I don't know, Eunice. Why don't you get Red down here?" As Mrs. Johnson hurried upstairs, Buckaroo gratefully peeled out of his thoroughly-slimed jumpsuit. Tommy was doing likewise from nearby, but Janine was stretched out on a nearby sofa, holding one hand over her face. "Janine?" Buckaroo called. "Feeling all right?"

"Yeah..." But when Little Red arrived, she headed straight over to her cousin and shoved a thermometer into place. "Have you been feeling bad all day?" she demanded.

Janine shook her head slightly, but Red wasn't buying. "Why didn't you bring her back here when you noticed she was ill?" she demanded of Buckaroo.

"Because at the time, she was the only one who knew what she was doing." He peered over the nurse's shoulder at the just-removed thermometer. "Mmm. Hundred-one, that doesn't sound good." Crouching down beside the couch, he smiled at Janine. "Tell me, Janine. Do you eat upstairs often?"

"Yeah..."

"Do you use the glasses, the silverware, and all that?"

"Yeah..."

"Do you ever shower here?"

"Uh...sometimes..."

"Is there a spare bedroom here?"

"Ummm...yeah, behind the kitchen."

Buckaroo looked up at Tommy. "Let's get her up there. Red, I think we've got another mono patient for you."

"Lovely," the RN groaned. "Bad enough that Egon's fussy, Ray's constantly wanting to go the bathroom, Winston refuses to admit he's sick, and Peter won't eat anything except cherry popsicles. Buckaroo, I'm going to get Flo over here so I can get some rest."

"Fine. See if she can bring some dinner, too. Come on, Janine..."

"I can't be sick," Janine sobbed as they hoisted her to her feet. "My cat needs to be fed...I haven't got anything to wear here..."

"We'll take care of everything," Buckaroo assured her. "Eunice..."

"I'm on it," she called from the desk. "Pinky's sending some Blue Blazes to take care of Janine's cat. And Red's getting one of Egon's nightshirts."

* * * * *

As the days passed, the fame of the "New Ghostbusters" quickly spread:

"NEW BUSTERS NAIL NINTH AVENUE NASTY!"

ECTO-1 roared through the late evening streets, in hot pursuit of "a real ugly purple slimy sucker," the use Perfect Tommy's precise terms. "Buckaroo--keep him close, I'll hit him through the sun roof!" Nightowl cried.

"This car doesn't have a sun roof!" Buckaroo yelled. There was a sudden explosion of sound and light from the back seat, followed seconds later by a rush of cold winter air.

"Uhhh...it does now," came Nightowl's sheepish reply.

"NEW BUSTERS WRAP UP GARMENT DISTRICT GHOST!"

"Tommy," Buckaroo bellowed over the roar of particle throwers, "select the fabric for your new suit AFTER we catch the thing, okay?"

"NEW BUSTERS SNATCH MUSEUM SPECTER!"

Perfect Tommy gaped in amazement as the curvaceous phantom floated before him, appraising her pursuer. Her long blond hair created a golden nimbus around her face, and the billowing white gown that barely covered her luscious body only served to excite him all the more. Suddenly, she vanished from sight, but seconds later, Tommy's jumpsuit started unzipping on its own accord, followed quickly by the trousers he wore underneath. He gasped as the most incredibly delicious sensations overwhelmed his senses...

There was a burst of white light, and the heavenly experience faded. Tommy glared at a smug Nightowl, who held a smoking trap in his hand. "Man, did you have to be in such a hurry?" Tommy complained.

"Oh God," Nightowl groaned as he stumbled out of ECTO-1. "I'm making all this money, and it's going towards getting me a new back. Where's the nearest hot tub?"

"Forget that," Tommy mumbled as he emerged from the car. "Where's the nearest chiropractor?" He winced as Little Red scrunched his shoulders. "Geez, if Spengler's such a genius, why can't he make lighter proton packs?"

"Perhaps he needs another point of view," Buckaroo remarked casually, eyeing the filing cabinets nearby. "Why don't we review the spec sheets on his design and see if we can't suggest a few modifications?"

"Buck, you know that's not a good idea," Mrs. Johnson rose and blocked his way, arms extended out. "Would you want him to go poking around with your oscillation-overthruster?"

"That's utter nonsense," Buckaroo replied, trying in vain to get around her. "Dr. Spengler knows nothing about multi-dimensional quantum physics."

"And you of course know everything about these doo-dads."

"Of course," he smiled. "I'm Buckaroo Banzai."

"Very funny," Little Red snapped, pulling him backwards with a sharp tug on his coveralls. "Keep your nose out of Egon's toys. I'm going back up to see how everyone is doing."

The reception was far from warm. "So the conquering heroes are back," Peter greeted Red snidely. "How many did they bag today? Twenty? Thirty?"

"Five, actually," Red informed him as she handed him his medication. "What's got your back up, Venkman?"

"All this!" He slapped a hand down on the pile of newspapers he'd been reading. "They're stealing our thunder! People are already forgetting about us--those guys are the darlings of the media right now!"

"Peter, I'm sure you're exaggerating," she assured him. "Remember--you asked them to help out."

"Actually, it was Janine," Egon remarked. "Red, how is she doing?"

"Sleeping most of the time," the nurse remarked. "You'll all be able to go downstairs in a day or two and watch TV. You can even visit her if you want, Egon."

"Huh?" he asked, mystified by Red's knowing smile.

"Oh joy," Peter groaned. "Sit there and watch the 'New Busters' hog the glory. Next thing you know, the toy people will want them added to the product line as well!"

"Janine?" Eunice poked her head through the doorway; the redhead receptionist was sitting up reading the latest issue of PEOPLE. "How you doing?"

"I'd be better if I wasn't sleeping all the time," she yawned. "How are things downstairs? Looks like they're doing all right."

"Oh yeah," Mrs. Johnson nodded. "In fact, business is up for some odd reason. Seems like the city is crawling with ghosts! Oh, that reminds me. You know that scheduling and billing program in your PC?"

"Yeah," Janine's eyes narrowed. "The one Egon wrote himself. What about it?"

"Well, it was so slow and didn't seem to be able to handle the jump in volume, so I had Billy write up a more efficient version, and he implemented it the other day. When you get back on your feet, I'll show you how it works. You'll be amazed!"

"You...what?" Janine gulped, eyes wide with disbelief.

"It's really so much better than that old clunker," Eunice continued, not noticing the reaction she was getting. "And when things were slow--which hasn't been often--I revised your filing system. How on Earth did you manage to cross-reference everything before?"

"You...WHAT?"

"Oh, you don't have to thank me," Eunice waved her off. "It was the least I could do for you. See you later!" She walked out the door, shutting it behind her.

Janine's face contorted with rage. "When I get the energy to get out of this bed, I'm going to KILL HERRR!!"

* * * * *

"All right, Peter," Egon whispered as footsteps echoed up the stairs, "you know what to do."

"Why me?" the dark-haired scientist sighed to no one in particular.

"Because you can go on command," Winston snickered, then slipped back into an expression of tired exhaustion as Little Red appeared. "How you doing, guys?" she asked happily (Tommy had gotten the previous night off).

"Uhhh, I gotta take care of business," Peter mumbled with just the right tone of helplessness. Red rolled her eyes but helped the "ailing" Ghostbuster to the bathroom.

As soon as they were out of sight, Egon climbed out of bed and stumbled to the window.

Opening it, Spengler withdrew his PKE meter from inside his pajamas and held it outside for several seconds. He then pulled the device back inside, shut the window, and hurried back into bed, studying the readings before returning the meter to its original location. Seconds later Peter and Red came staggering back. "Anyone else feel like going for a stroll?" the nurse puffed as Peter fell back into bed.

"I think we're fine, Red," Ray smiled. "But boy, are we hungry!"

"That's a good sign," she beamed. "Let me grab Eunice and we'll fix you a big meal." The Ghostbusters smiled gratefully and waited until her head had vanished beneath the stairwell, then turned to Egon.

"It's not good," he admitted. "That surge in ectoplasmic energy has continued to build up."

"Man," Winston sighed. "Am I glad I'm not out there right now."

"Yeah," Peter frumped. "But the rookies are getting all the action, all the attention, and ten percent of the money."

"I'm rather concerned about them, too." Egon pushed his glasses further up and coughed. "We're used to these holiday surges and plan accordingly. They don't have our experience. We'll have to advise them on strategy, especially with the class-eight entities that show up around now. We'd best have a long talk with them tonight."

At that point Red and Mrs. Johnson showed up with breakfast, so the topic was dropped for the time being.

* * * * *

"Well, I think that does it," Nightowl sighed as he collapsed against the side of ECTO-1. "Let's call it a day and head on back. I've got some last-minute Christmas shopping to do."

Buckaroo lifted a hand up in warning; he was studying his rapidly-beeping PKE meter. "I'm getting a very strong reading from not too far away. The numbers are on the red side of the scale."

"Buck, no!" Nightowl pleaded. "It can wait..."

"Lessee," Perfect Tommy ordered, taking the meter from his boss. "Wow. Must be a real beaut! Maybe we ought to take a look."

"No, no, no," Nightowl groaned, banging his head against ECTO's roof.

"It certainly wouldn't hurt," Buckaroo agreed with Tommy. "Something that strong shouldn't be left unchecked. Nightowl, you drive. I'll direct you there."

They clambered into the battered vehicle. "I've got a bad feeling about this," Nightowl sighed forlornly as he started the engine.

The Gloeckner-Wortham Emotional/Physical Trauma Center had been a going concern for many years, but time and finances had eventually closed the building down. Now it sat in the midst of a blighted neighborhood, looking barren and defeated in the fading light of dusk. ECTO roared to a stop in front of the building. "This is it," Buckaroo announced.

"Are you sure about this?" Nightowl asked, eyeing the ruins nervously. "I mean that was one heck of a reading, higher than anything we've gone up against so far. Maybe we should call Spengler or Stantz for advice?"

"Come on, Owl," Tommy chided. "This is gonna be a piece of cake. We've got the equipment, we got the ability, we got the experience--what are you worried about?"

"I don't like this," the dark-haired Cavalier muttered, but his comment was lost in the explosion resulting from Tommy firing his particle thrower at the boarded-up doorway. He watched his two partners step through the smoking gateway, then shook his head in resignation. "Oh hell, who wants to live forever?" he grumbled to himself as he followed.

"Kinda dark, isn't it?" Tommy remarked, flipping his flashlight on and playing the beams through the inky blackness. The air was musty with time and dust; the boards beneath their feet creaked in protest as they explored the interior of the building. Buckaroo waved the meter about in large arcs, motioning for the others to follow where the signal grew stronger.

"I don't think this was such a great idea," Nightowl repeated. The hairs on the back of his neck were tingling, and he had the sensation that they were being watched. He tightened his grip on the particle thrower and strained to catch a glimpse of anything moving about.

"Oh shut up, willya?" Tommy growled. "You got no sense of adventure anymore, Owl, ever since you got married and had a kid. You've gotten to be a big wuss."

"No, just a tad more cautious now that I've got something to stay intact for."

"Hmmp." Tommy held the flashlight so that Buckaroo could descend a flight of stairs. "You're providing me a great excuse to never get married. You aren't gonna see me get tied down, no way."

Despite his foreboding, Nightowl smiled. "I'll be sure and tell Red that."

"Quiet," Buckaroo ordered, waiting for them to join him at the foot of the stairwell. "The readings are pointing there...no, there...no, over there..."

"Uh-oh," Nightowl muttered, switching his proton back on.

"Gentlemen," Buckaroo calmly announced, "I believe we are surrounded by a number of ghosts."

As if on cue, an unearthly glow from dozens of angry spectres filled the chamber.

Tommy gulped nervously. "And boy, do they look pissed!"

* * * * *

Back at Ghostbusters Central, Mrs. Johnson was pacing nervously around Janine's desk. "They're 45 minutes overdue . Something's wrong."

Little Red poked her head through the fire pole gap in the ceiling. "Still not in? Eunice, you know how bad traffic is at this hour. Maybe they're stuck in gridlock."

"But I can't reach them on the cellular in ECTO, either. This isn't like Buckaroo; Rawhide's drilled it into his head time and again to check in when things go off schedule..." Just then her Go-phone beeped an "alert" signal. Slamming her finger down on the "activate" button, she breathlessly asked, "Buckaroo? Where are you?"

In the background she could particle throwers wailing away. "Eunice, we're in a bit of a bind right now. We were lured into a trap meant for the Ghostbusters. Could you possibly put Egon or one of the others on?"

Little Red cut into the conversation via her own Go-phone. "Here's Egon, Boss. How's Tommy?"

"Later, Red. Egon?"

"Yes, Dr. Banzai?" Egon spoke into the tiny device, eyes narrowed in concentration.

"We are surrounded in close quarters by about thirty or so ghosts, with our only escape route blocked. Our traps are rapidly dwindling to a minimum. You wouldn't have any advice at the moment, would you?"

"What did the meter read prior to manifestation?" Buckaroo relayed the data; Egon's face tightened further. "Dr. Banzai, I would say that you have far more than thirty ghosts in there. Eighty would be a conservative estimate."

"Whattya know?" Peter grinned. "The golden boys have gotten themselves in trouble but good!"

"This isn't funny," Red growled, waving a rectal thermometer in his face; Peter paled and shut up. "Egon," she continued, "what can they do?"

"It doesn't look good," Ray commented. "Having no backup at the entry point, they're pinned down. And as soon as their traps are full..." His face fell into a mournful frown.

At that moment, there was a cry of pain, and the Go-phone went dead.

Egon turned and faced his comrades. "Gentlemen...we're needed."

"Oh no you don't!" Red cried. "You're in no shape to...to..." Realization that her beloved Tommy was in mortal peril gave her pause. "Ohhhh...all right, but I'm going with you!"

"Uh, Egon," Peter remarked as he dug around for his coveralls, "assuming we're healthy enough to work, and capable of carrying around those godawful proton packs--those guys have the only working models, remember?"

The lanky scientist smiled grimly and marched to his laboratory, unlocking the door and slamming it open with a flourish. When the other Ghostbusters peered within, they saw five proton packs neatly hanging on the wall. "I've been redesigning them," Egon noted as he pulled one down and slipped it upon his back. "They're lighter and more efficient in power usage."

"Not bad," Peter grunted as he pulled a second one down. "How do they work in the field?"

"Uhhh..actually, I hadn't really gotten time for a proper field test, what with this virus and all."

"Well, no time like the present, huh?" Winston grinned. "Guys, let's go save the rookies' butts and let those goopers know the REAL Ghostbusters are back!"

"Relatively speaking," Ray wheezed, swaying beneath his proton pack.

Egon tiptoed into Janine's room and leaned close to the dozing figure. "Oh, Janine..."

"Hmmm?"

"Where are your car keys?"

A hand emerged from the blankets and waved listlessly about. "Over by the dresser in my purse. Go away."

Five minutes later, it suddenly occurred to her a) who had been in there, b) what he'd asked for (drat!), and c) most likely why. Racing for the window, Janine watched in horror as Egon and the others piled into her precious pink VW Beetle. "You guys had better not put a single scratch or dent on that car, or you're dead meat, soon as I have the strength to kill you!" she screamed out the window.

* * * * *

Things were not looking good.

Tommy had tripped while eluding a team of spectres and twisted his ankle rather badly. Nightowl had been tricked into firing at the ceiling, and a large pile of plaster and rotted wood had crashed upon him. Buckaroo noticed the ugly red gash on his partner's forehead but could do nothing to help; the three of them stood (or sat) back to back, firing at anything that came close enough to hit. But since they were out of traps, it was a futile, delaying gesture.

Buckaroo slammed a particle beam into a particularly ugly ghost, then sent it flying into another bunch of horrors. "Rather reminds me of a time or two in Sabah," he yelled matter-of-factly to his companions.

"Everything reminds you of a time or two in Sabah," Nightowl grunted from the floor.

"Odds were about the same," Tommy agreed, firing a burst of energy at a spook that had come too close. "Any ideas?"

"About the only way we're going to get out of here, short of a miracle, is back the way we came." But even Buckaroo could see there was no way to do so; the ghosts had them securely pinned down. And sooner or later someone would make a fatal mistake...

Suddenly a familiar aura of white energy exploded from the stairway, and a large squadron of spirits abruptly vanished in the rapidly-fading nimbus. "Hey, you lousy bunch of ingrates, you threw a party and forgot to invite us!" declared a grinning Peter Venkman, who held a smoking trap.

"Invitation must have been lost in the mail," Buckaroo called back. "But feel free to join in, don't let us stop you." He captured a ghost in his particle beam and sent it flying the Ghostbusters' way; Ray hit an activation petal, and the trap captured both that ghost and several others.

Within minutes, the tide had turned. Egon handed Nightowl a strip of cloth for his wound, then waded fearlessly into the remaining pile of spirits with his particle beams, sending the entities flying straight into Winston's traps. Seconds later, the room was quiet once more save for a great deal of panting and groaning.

Little Red came flying down the stairs. "Oh Tommy, are you all right?" she cried, flying past a bloody Nightowl into Tommy's arms. Buckaroo shook his head with a tired smile and moved over to the wounded Cavalier, who was sitting glassy-eyed on at the foot of the stairs. "How do you feel?"

"Awful," came the reply instants before his lunch wound up on the floor.

"Looks like a concussion as well as the gash," Buckaroo studied the wound carefully. "A few stitches and a few days in bed, and you'll be back to normal."

"I can't," Nightowl groaned. "Christmas..."

"I'm sure Princess can take care of the shopping."

The injured man looked up despairingly. "That's what forced me into this in the first place!"

"Guys," Peter cut in, "why don't we split this joint and head back to the firehouse? I'm ready to go back to bed."

"Sounds good," Buckaroo nodded. "I think we need to drop Tommy and Nightowl off by the hospital first, though. We'll meet you at Ghostbusters Central. You taking ECTO?"

"No, I don't think so," Egon declined. "If Janine finds out that anyone else drove her car, I shudder to think of the consequences..."

"Yeah," Tommy agreed, hopping upstairs with Red's tender support. "Redheads are not to be trifled with, you know?"

* * * * *

Just outside the firehouse, Buckaroo and Peter shook hands warmly. "Well, I don't think you'll be needing us any longer," the neurosurgeon commented. "But if you ever should need some help..."

"I know, we'll call," Peter promised.

"...and we get the lighter packs," Buckaroo finished with a smile.

"We'll see," Ray agreed brightly. "How are Tommy and Nightowl?"

"Tommy was checked at Gen's E.R. and released. They're holding Nightowl overnight for observation; I suspect he is getting fussed over and read the riot act by his wife in equal measures." He yawned and stretched. "Well, let me get Eunice away from that desk, and we'll be off."

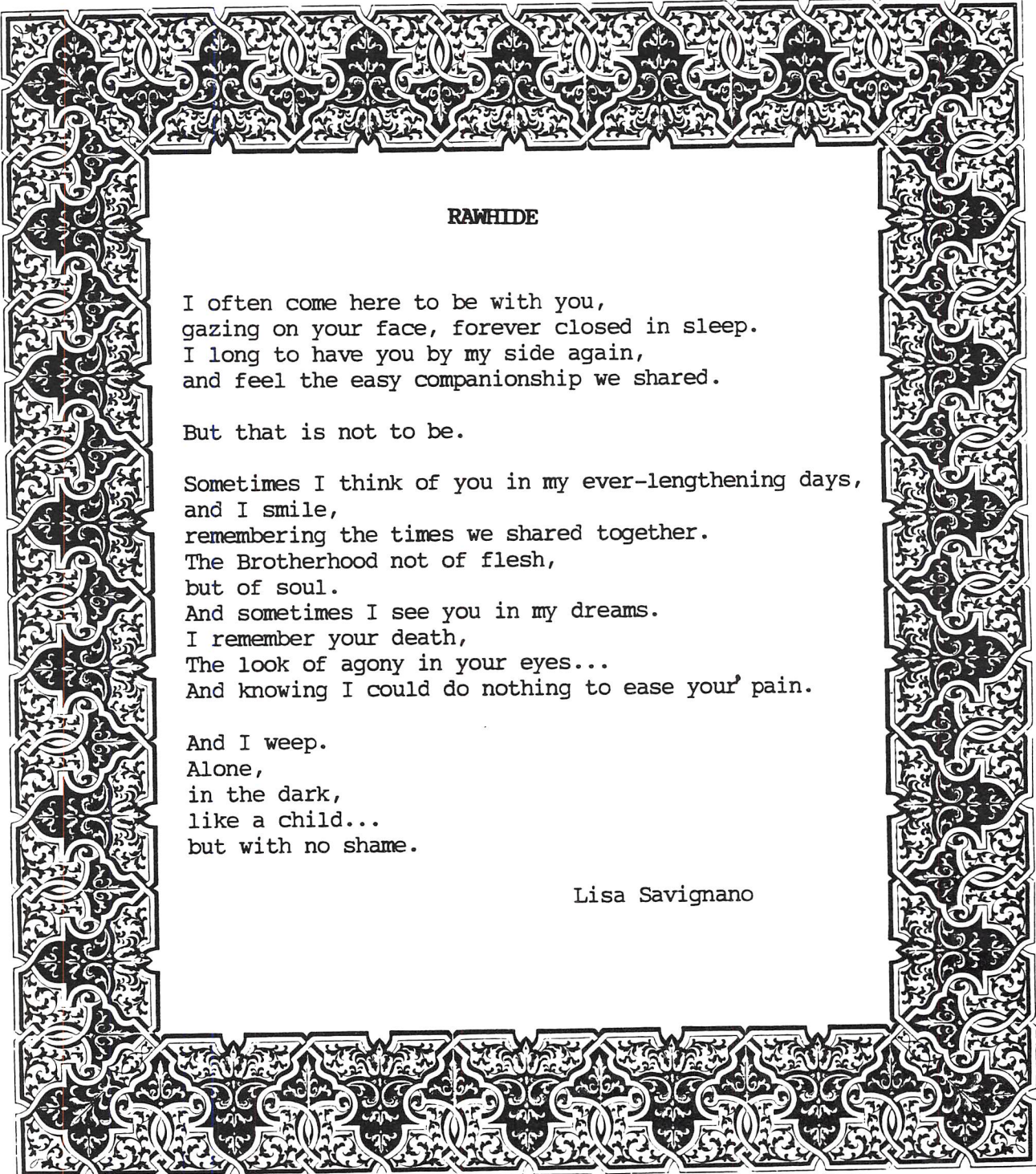
The four Ghostbusters and their guest slipped through the front door and walked past ECTO towards the main office. To their surprise, Mrs. Johnson was busily working, yanking files out of one cabinet and hurriedly dropping them into another. So intent was she on her work that she didn't even raise her head to say hello.

A low, evil snicker quickly showed them the reason for her industriousness.

Janine sat in a nearby chair, clad in pink robe and fuzzy slippers. Beside her sat the fifth new proton pack, its particle thrower resting securely in her lap. "Oh, hi guys," the redhead smiled contentedly. "I was feeling so much better, I decided to come down and keep Eunice company while she put the files back in the correct order. She should be done in about an hour, wouldn't you say, Eunice?"

A dark-haired head bobbed frantically up and down.

"Nobody messes with Melnitz," Janine declared smugly. "Or her filing system, got it?"



RAWHIDE

I often come here to be with you,
gazing on your face, forever closed in sleep.
I long to have you by my side again,
and feel the easy companionship we shared.

But that is not to be.

Sometimes I think of you in my ever-lengthening days,
and I smile,
remembering the times we shared together.
The Brotherhood not of flesh,
but of soul.
And sometimes I see you in my dreams.
I remember your death,
The look of agony in your eyes...
And knowing I could do nothing to ease your' pain.

And I weep.
Alone,
in the dark,
like a child...
but with no shame.

Lisa Savignano

BANZINE II: THE NEXT GENERATION

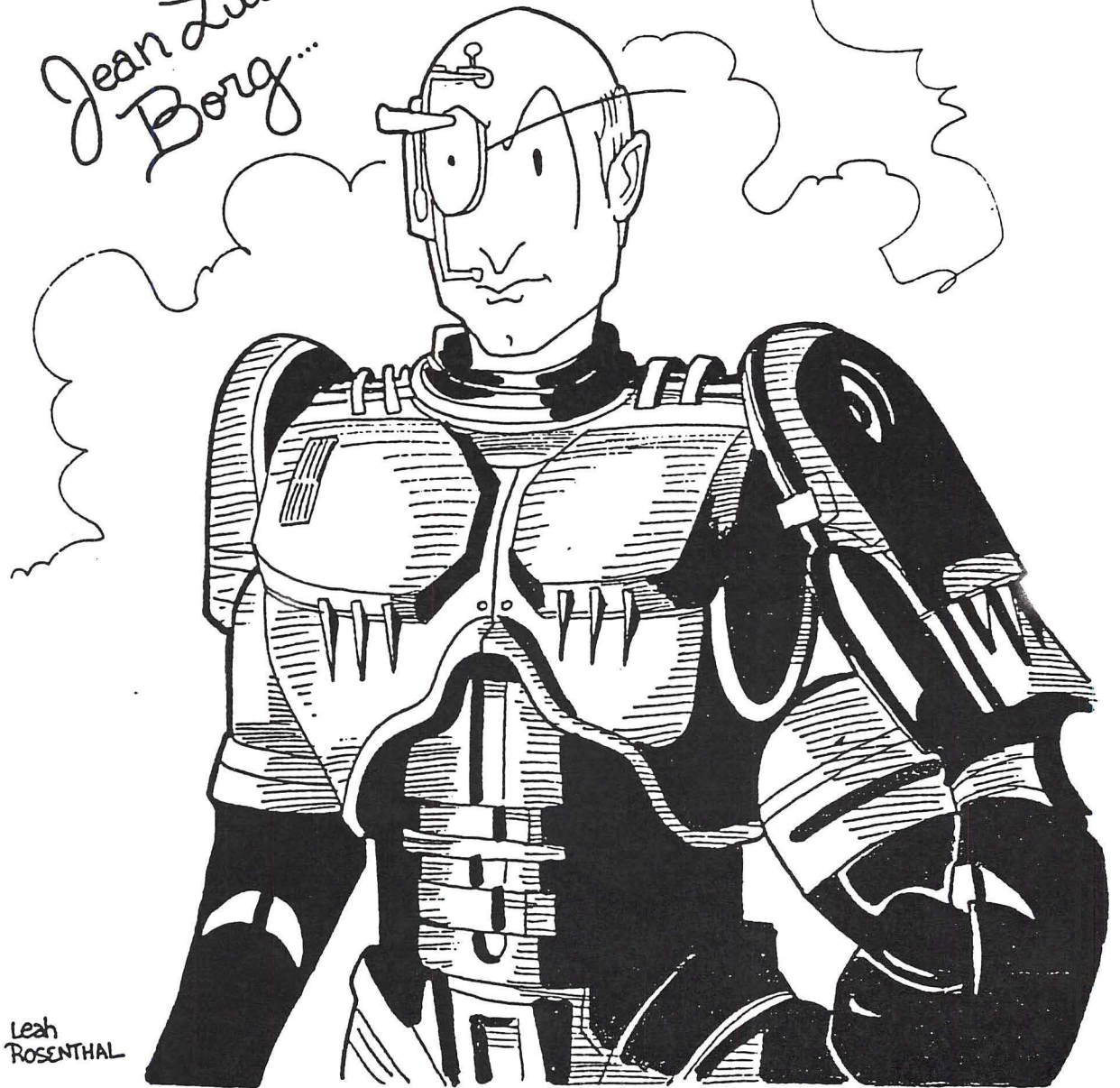
In which Leah Rosenthal, Mark Sellmeyer and Sandra Williams present a lighter side to Captain Picard and the USS ENTERPRISE-D, with a piece from STAR TREK V: THE FINAL INSULT...err, FRONTIER for everyone who liked the film. Both of you.

STAR TREK NG SEASON FINALE How it Might have been!



Next Season on STAR TREK--

*Jean Luc
Borg...*



RoboCap!

ECLIP TIC

BY SANDRA WILLIAMS

THE NEXT
IDIOT WHO
COMPAIRS ME
TO THE FRONT
END OF A
1953
BUICK



GETS PUNCHED
IN THE MOUTH
AND CHUCKED INTO
THE MAIN THRUSTER!!

ECLIP TIC

BY SANDRA WILLIAMS

WE ARE
PAKLEDs.
WE LOOK FOR
THINGS.
THINGS WE NEED.
WE LIKE IT
WHEN WE GET
THINGS.
GEORDI
GAVE US
SOMETHING.



GEORDI IS
SMART.
WE DON'T LIKE
HIS GIFT.
GEORDI GAVE US
SOMETHING CALLED
"PO-TA-TOE"
PEELER.
GEORDI SAID
TO USE IT
ON OUR
HEADS.
GEORDI NOT NICE.

ECLIPSE

BY SANDRA WILLIAMS

ARE THE
ANTEDIANS
EATING OUT OF
THAT BARREL OR
GETTING SICK INTO
IT?!



ECLIPSE

BY SANDRA WILLIAMS

THE ONLY THING THE ROMULANS
UNDERSTAND
IS A "SHLAP"
IN THE FACE
AN' A
"SHLUG" FROM
A
"FOUR-DEE-FIVE"...



Bones, I know you've always had it in
for Spock, but beans and bourbon--
Fiendish! Tsk-tsk...





IMIRGINDIEALU4.911

REBIRTH

ERIC HOFFMAN art by MELODY RONDEAU

"This is remarkable!"

As she examined the schematics and formulae that were spread before her, Chancellor Daria, formerly Special Inquisitor of the Tribunal of the former High Council of Gallifrey, now Acting President of the newly reorganized High Council, could only shake her head in amazement and wonder.

Within a comparatively short period of time, a problem that had been eluding some of the best minds in Time Travel Research had been solved by someone who, only a comparatively short time ago (by Gallifreyan standards (a year-and-a-half by our own Earth reckoning)), had been considered to be one of the most evil beings ever to emerge from Time Lord society.

Yet, since he had been allowed to follow certain lines of scientific and temporal research following his "rehabilitation", he had attained a status and respect that few Time Lords had achieved. At least during their lifetimes.

The modifications and theory that he had come up with to enable the almost pin-point tracking of time travel capsules (thereby insuring the safe return of those who sometimes became lost in the chaos of the Time-Space Vortex) was but the latest of his remarkable and dedicated work.

Activating the audio link with the Temporal Mechanics section, Chancellor Daria said, "The specifications and improvements are exactly what was needed. They are to be implemented in all operating capsules as soon as possible. The proper documents will be sent to you within the next few days. If there are any questions or problems, consult with the designer. He has said he will be at your disposal if needed and will be more than happy to assist in its implementation."

The communication ended, Chancellor Daria sat back in her chair for a moment, mind racing over the period of time that had passed since the chaos caused by the previous High Council's cover-up of the tampering with the planet Earth, moving the populated world out of its orbit (resulting in the almost wholesale destruction of the beings on its surface) and the trial of the Doctor. All to protect the secrets that had been stolen from the Matrix by the beings from Andromeda known as The Sleepers.

It had taken the trial and its subsequent developments to unmask the deception and self-serving actions of the old High Council. The trial and its revelations had not only brought about the fall of the Council itself, but the near-plunge into chaos of Time Lord Society as well.

And all party due to the efforts of the Time Lord who had attempted to use the Matrix for his own ends while turning up as a **very unexpected** "friend of the court" to help the Doctor's case! Even after all this time, the former head of that tribunal still found herself shaking her head in amazement.

Especially when the being in question had been the Doctor's mortal enemy. And now who, thanks to newly developed Time Lord techniques in mind 'rehabilitation', had risen in respect and prestige in Time Lord society that there had even been serious talk about having him nominated for the Presidency of the High Council in spite of a past that, to say the least, stood out as an example of unmitigated, ruthless villainy on a cosmic scale!

However, the Time Lord now known as Cormak had firmly refused the suggestion by some of Thalia's colleagues.

"I am honored, gentlemen," he had said in the soft, gentle, surprisingly modest manner that had become part of his personality since his "rebirth", as he liked to put it. "But the ambition for power almost brought down this Time Lord civilization of ours, so I've been told. No, I have no desire for anything further than my life as it is now. Believe me, I am quite content with my work here. **This** is my world. I assure you, I aspire to nothing higher."

A smile flitted across Daria's face as she considered for a moment what the Doctor's reaction would have been if he had heard Cormak's words and **recognized** who this almost-saintly being was.

Since his removal from the restored Matrix circuits and his 'rehabilitation', Cormak had produced discoveries and technical developments that had benefited the Time Lords. At times, it seemed as if that was all that he lived for. If he would be allowed to, he would never leave his research unit to even rest, engrossed as he was with some new project or other.

Hard to believe, but there it was. Someday, she would contact the Doctor and tell him what had happened to his former arch-enemy.

* * * * *

"Yes," the Time Lord who now called himself Cormak said in a tone of satisfaction, "I think we've got it at last!"

"What's that, sir?" one of the technicians working with Cormak inquired, certain that he was party to a great moment.

"See for yourself in the micro-viewer," Cormak said with a gentle smile, indicating the device through which he had made his final observations of his latest work.

"Thank you, sir," the technician, one Bartal, said eagerly.

"Don't thank me, young man," Cormak said. "After all, it was with your help that I have been able to succeed. Or rather, ~~we~~ succeeded."

A look of disbelief passed across the technician's face as he reacted to Cormak's words. "But I really didn't do anything!" he protested. "It was your idea, your discovery."

"But without you and the rest of you," Cormak insisted, indicating with a sweep of his arm the four other people in the laboratory room with him, "we would never have found the answer to defeating the fever that has made regeneration so difficult for many of our fellows. Look, Bartal! Look at what our efforts have accomplished! Thanks to our work, another difficulty in our people's periodic metamorphosis has been succumbed. Perhaps, one day..."

A sad look passed over Cormak's face for a moment as the knowledge that all in the laboratory knew flashed through their minds. Although he was a Time Lord, his body was not a Gallifreyan's, but rather the usurped shell of a man who had once been a benevolent scholar and scientist as he was now.

"Sir, are you all right?" one of the other technicians, an attractive Time Lady named Bera said with concern.

"I'm all right, my dear, quite all right. It's just that at a moment like this, it is a bit ironic that while I have helped to come up with something that will help our fellow Time Lords, I am not able to share in its benefits."

"Surely, sir, there is something that can be done..." Bera began.

"No, my dear, I'm afraid there is nothing. At one time, I was offered a whole new span of regeneration, but thinking back on it, I know it would not have worked. Mine is an alien's body and would not have adapted well to Gallifreyan techniques entirely. But perhaps..." Another sigh escaped Cormak as he stood, head bowed for a moment before straightening and turning a bright smile upon his aides.

Lifting a finger to emphasize his words, the scholar said, "Let this be a lesson to all of you. The path I chose in my past was one of evil and destruction. And you see what has happened. There really is no idea of how long I have the chance to somehow atone for the crimes I have learned that I committed during my millennia as that other being..."

Raising his hands to his eyes, Cormak rubbed them as he said, "I leave the documentation and final analysis to your capable hands. I'm afraid that this old being's not as young as he used to be; I must get a little rest for a moment. If you will excuse me."

As Cormak turned and walked to the exit from the lab, the four technicians stood up as one and bowed in respect to him. But the object of their admiration did not seem to notice it as, rubbing his hands across his eyes once more, he exited into the corridors that would take him to his quarters just past the central meeting complex.

* * * * *

Pain flashed through Cormak's head once more, causing him to wince and rub his eyes. It had been occurring more frequently as of late, causing him to fear that some sort of deterioration was beginning in the body he had usurped in his other life.

But an immediate examination had revealed no trace of any sort of physical problem whatsoever. It had been as complete and as minute as Time Lord medicine could carry out.

And yet, the pains and headaches had continued, occurring at odd times, even when he would be hard at work in the laboratory where he devoted much of his time. He had been able to hide his discomforts from his four devoted assistants, whom he had come to think of as his "children". But still, it was difficult.

And then there were the strange images that would flash through his memory, there long enough to barely register, yet quick enough so that he could never get a complete grip on them.

Now, tossing and turning on his bed, Cormak began to softly cry out in his sleep, jumbled words and sounds escaping his lips. At one point, a voice like his and yet not like his--colder, harsher--began speaking. If anybody had been present, they would have heard the words, "Peoples of the planet Earth, please pay close attention. The message that follows is vital to you all..." before the sound of laughter drifted through the room.

It was a laugh that could freeze the blood with the evil in its tones.

* * * * *

"You have performed, for want of a better term, a miracle," Chancellor Daria said to Cormak, as they looked through the observation window of the recovery room in the special wing of the Citadel.

The Time Lord lying in bed was one of the finest thinkers and historians in the Archives Department. But because of his great age, it had been feared that the difficulty that had marred his two previous regenerations (and which had once almost cost him his life) would bring an end to his career.

But Cormak's discovery, a remarkable enzyme, had enabled the regeneration to proceed smoothly and without any ill effects. Even now, the newly regenerated scholar was demanding to be allowed to get back to his books and researches, even though he knew he would be transferred to the Panopticon Zero Room for some very much needed final healing.

"Your discovery..."

"The discovery of myself and those four dedicated young people..." Cormak said with a gentle smile, raising an admonishing index finger.

"The discovery you and your team has made has given us a new way to deal with one of the difficulties of our regenerations. You shall all be honored for this," Chancellor Daria declared.

"Please, please, dear lady, you have heaped honors enough upon me. But these young people who have worked with me, they have put so much of themselves into our work. I merely pointed the way. They were the ones who worked so dedicatedly."

"I cannot understand **why** you are insisting on this, but your wishes will be honored, Cormak," Daria replied. "However, I insist that **you** will be the one to make the actual presentation at the ceremony. It will mean more to them if their reward comes from your hands."

"Thank you, madam," Cormak said with that gentle smile. "I will be more than glad to do that."

Suddenly, a twinge of pain crossed his face for a moment, evoking a cry of concern from Chancellor Daria.

"Are you all right? What's wrong?"

"It's...it's nothing, nothing. I fear I have been overworking too much lately, and now I'm paying the price, I fear, for a scientist's overenthusiasm. If you will excuse me, I think I'll go to my quarters. I feel a bit tired."

"Of course, Cormak," Chancellor Daria said, laying a hand on his arm. "You, of all people, deserve to rest. I will inform you when the ceremony will be."

But Cormak was already moving down the hallway away from her. If her eyes were not deceiving her, Chancellor Daria thought he had stumbled for a moment. A worried frown appeared on her face as she decided to consult with the medical section at the first opportunity.

* * * * *

Images flashing...Images of a being who lingered at the back of Cormak's mind. A figure in black whose features were never seen except in faint outline or wreathed in shadows, but whose voice was that of the tones that sometimes escaped the now-groaning man when he was in the throes of unremembered yet haunting nightmare.

A procession of almost subliminal images; images that were even now rousing a part of his mind to a sort of awareness as he gazed upon the deeds of someone who seemed to be from another lifetime.

Images of evil followed, one after the other, all involving the figure in black.

Or rather, several figures who were one yet were not.

There was a man in dark, elegant alien clothing, his trimmed goatee and widow's peak hairstyle giving him a rightly demonic look as he tried to conquer a planet called Earth, either in partnership with other beings or finally on his own. Then there was the deteriorating creature whose appearance even caused horror

and loathing within itself as it sought to find a way of gaining ultimate power. And finally, the figure in black who had been another person as well...

Images of another being, one who inspired feelings of admiration mixed with hatred. Yet he never appeared the same for long. One moment would see him as a tall, silver-white haired figure in eccentrically elegant clothing. Another would see him in another eccentric yet slightly more subdued garb with a seemingly endless scarf cascading from his shoulder with a floppy hat perched atop a head of curly hair. Again the hated figure would change into a younger, fair-haired one in casual clothing. And then there would be the truly eccentric figure in multi-colored clothing, foiling each new enterprise until...until...

Pain! Disorientation! The memory of defeat and humiliation many times over. The pain of flaming heat searing flesh yet restoring. Death and life intermingled. But oh, what torment...torment of the damned.

And then the shattering of the self! The consciousness torn into tiny pieces! All still aware as one, all helpless, all screaming silently for release, all hearing someone saying, "When you restore the Matrix, I don't care what you do with...but be lenient with..."

Lenient with who? With the helpless enraged being trapped within a scrambled implosion of electronic neural circuitry?

Left behind to suffer the agony of conscious yet bodiless imprisonment...?

Mocking laughter filled Cormak's mind as a gloating voice intoned, "You have denied me long enough, my friend. I wait no longer..."

"Who are you?" Cormak demanded in his mind, trying to shut out the visions in his head. "Who are you!!"

And even as Cormak demanded to know the identity of the figure that tormented him in his unconscious visions, it seemed to move more and more out of the darkness and into a glowing light until its face was about to finally be revealed.

"Don't you know?" the figure replied.

* * * * *

"Sir! Are you all right! Master Cormak! Are you hurt!"

Cormak's eyes tried to focus on the features before him as the hands of a concerned assistant tried to provide assistance.

Slowly, gradually, the faces of his four assistants came into focus, fear and concern for their superior visible on their young faces.

"Master Cormak," the girl called Bera cried out once more, "What's wrong, are you ill?"

"What...what am I doing here?"

"We heard a cry as we were coming into the laboratory to do a few tests to verify our last findings..."

"Good...good..." Cormak said automatically.

"...when we came in, you were leaning against the wall, your hands over your face, saying something we couldn't make out. Please, sir, can't we do anything for you?"

"No, my dear, no. It's just a manifestation of overwork. I guess the importance of our project overrode my need for rest and sleep...but, you say you found me here?"

"Yes sir," a young man named Torel replied.

"Funny, I don't recall...Good heavens, I must have been walking in my sleep!" Cormak said with a rueful chuckle.

"Walking in your sleep? But why come here?"

"Why not! What more logical place than that where I have been spending so many hours. So many **happy** hours. Ah, my young friends, I'm afraid you see before you the result of too much dedication to one's researches. So let that be a lesson to you," he added with a mock-severe scowl.

Then, with another rubbing of his eyes and a deep breath, Cormak looked at his assistants and said, "You said you were going to run some verification tests?"

"That's right sir."

"Well, let's take care of it then. Since I no longer feel distressed, I'll observe you. I want to be sure if my words about the four of you to Chancellor Daria were in vain."

Startled at first by this little bit of information, the four assistants went to work, watched with an affectionate smile by Cormak.

So absorbed, however, were they in their work that they did not see their mentor lean against the wall once more, his eyes closing as his hands raised themselves to cover his face again.

It was Bera who noticed that Cormak was turned away from them, his body hunched over, twitching as if in

the middle of some kind of struggle. The strange sounds that were coming from him brought back the feeling of alarm that they had felt when they had heard his cry earlier in the hallway.

And then as quickly as it had seemed to start, the twitching of Cormak's body seemed to stop.

But there was something different about him. His whole stance as he began to straighten up, back still to them, was different. It looked like Cormak's familiar form, and yet there was something about it that was not the same.

Something that made them feel...afraid.

And then a voice spoke. Their superior's voice, yet the tones were different, colder.

"My body...At last...I am whole again..."

"Sir...Master Cormak! Are you all right!"

"I'm quite all right. Now..." Cormak said, turning around.

He was smiling.

Bera screamed.

* * * * *

Chancellor Daria could only stare at what was left of Cormak's laboratory. Shattered flasks and retorts lay everywhere, chemicals splattering the walls. Delicate equipment lay in pieces as if someone had taken great glee in smashing them to rubble.

"Madame President! Look!" the Captain of the Guard exclaimed, pointing at something by one of the work benches.

At first glance, it looked like somebody's robes. But on further examination, Chancellor Daria recognized them as belonging to Cormak. With a feeling of dread, she approached the piece of apparel until she could make out something sticking out from beneath one of the folds of the garment.

A feeling of dread building inside her, Chancellor Daria turned back the fabric and stared in gradually growing horror at the doll-like corpses of Cormak's four assistants, their eyes wide in what looked to her as uncomprehending horror.

"A strange thing to leave behind, Ma'am. Dolls, I mean."

"Those aren't...dolls, Captain. Those are Master Cormak's four assistants."

"But, how...how could they be turned into..."

"Did you ever hear of a Tissue Compression Eliminator?" Chancellor Daria snapped, a suspicion beginning to form in her mind.

As the Captain began to reply, the speaker in the laboratory suddenly began to broadcast: "Will the President please come to Central Control as soon as possible. Will the President please come to Central Control as soon as possible..."

"Leave one of your men to stand guard," Chancellor Daria snapped, rushing out of the door. As he followed her, the Captain assigned one of his retinue to remain in the laboratory.

* * * * *

"Look! Look at it!"

The Keeper of the Matrix was a study in shock as Chancellor Daria and the Captain of the Guard entered the Central Control complex.

"What has happened, Keeper?" she said to the man who was known to the members of the High Council as the Keeper of the matrix, the repository of all Time Lord knowledge.

All the usually dignified man could do was point with a quivering finger and give vent to what sounded to Daria as a sob of...pain?

Turning in the direction indicated by the shaken Keeper, the acting President of the High Council could only stare in horror, before she was distracted by further bad news being brought to her attention.

"Madam President," a young man who, according to the symbols on his robes, was in charge of the area where the Time Capsules were docked, "something has incapacitated every TARDIS in the docking bays! We cannot launch a one!"

"Be more specific!" Chancellor Daria snapped.

"About a half hour ago, someone proceeded to enter one of the TARDISes that were to be modified with the new circuitry as you instructed. When we demanded to know who it was, he identified himself and went inside. A short time later, dematerialization procedures were started without any clearance from Control. We

immediately began to launch a pursuit capsule after him, but when we began to launch, well, everything was incapacitated! Dead! Nothing would function! We cannot launch a single TARDIS!"

"Is this a permanent condition?"

"Fortunately not, My Lady. We began an immediate systems check and discovered that the condition was temporary. The time-space crafts will be dormant for another hour. I don't understand **how** he did it!"

"You said that the person who stole the TARDIS identified himself. Who was it?"

"It was the scientist Cormak, Madam."

"It didn't hold," she moaned quietly. "The 'rehabilitation' did not hold. He was too strong for it after all."

"What are you talking about, Madame President?"

"He was still there. Inside. Waiting, slowly breaking it down, bit by bit. And now those poor young people and..."

Her explanation stopped as her attention returned towards the object of the Keeper's horror. Her own horror joined his moments later as she stared at the monitor screen of the Matrix.

If ever there was an embodiment of Chaos, it was there before her eyes on the screen. A madness of color and visual distortion and sound. All combined in a swirling, boiling whirlpool of total bedlam.

"The Matrix!" she gasped, turning to the Keeper. "What...how!"

"I don't know, Madame President," the Keeper said grimly. "It's as if the entire neural system is in a state of shock. I already have my people trying to find a means of correcting it, but for the present, we are stymied. Who could have done such a thing, and how?"

As if in answer to his question, something began to appear on the screen. At first it was part of the visual madness before them. But then, words seemed to be forming themselves even as they watched.

As the message swam into view, Chancellor Daria could only moan softly as she and the others with her read:

PRESIDENT DARIA,

I APOLOGIZE FOR MY HASTY DEPARTURE. IT WAS MOST UNGRACIOUS OF ME NOT TO THANK YOU AND YOUR ASSOCIATES PERSONALLY FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY DURING MY STAY ON GALLIFREY.

REST ASSURED, HOWEVER, THAT AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY, I WILL RECTIFY THIS OVERSIGHT.

I HAVE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF "BORROWING" ONE OF THE MANY TARDISES THAT YOU HAVE ON HAND. I AM SURE THAT YOU WILL NOT MIND.

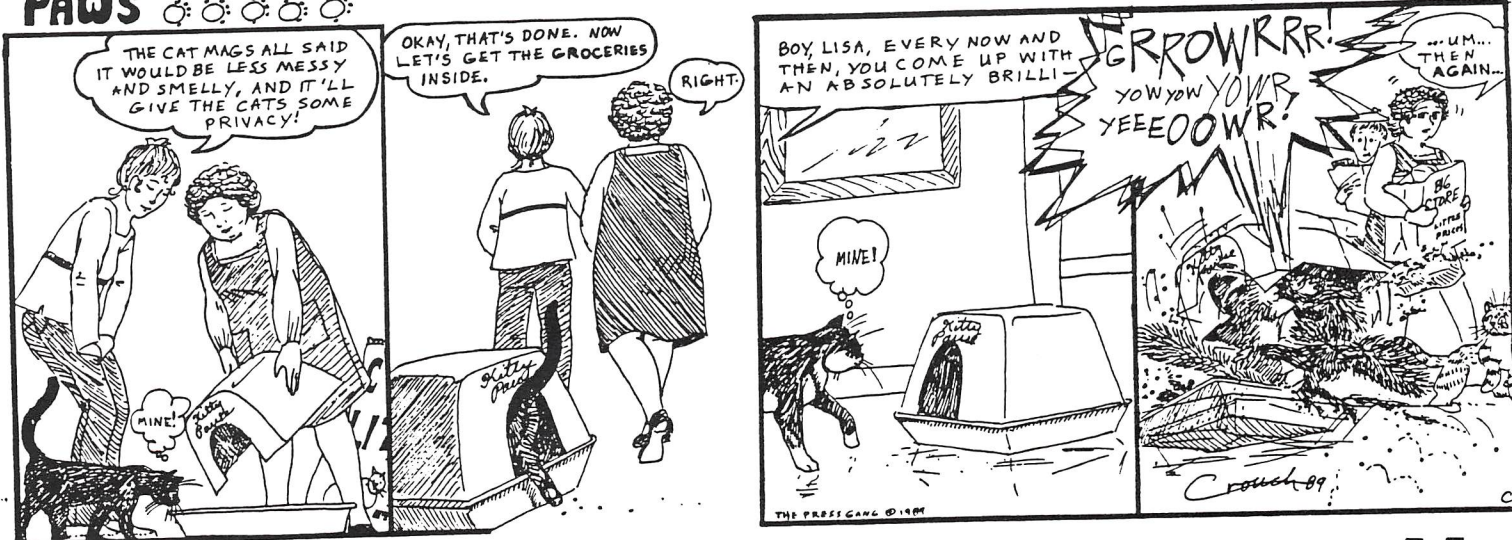
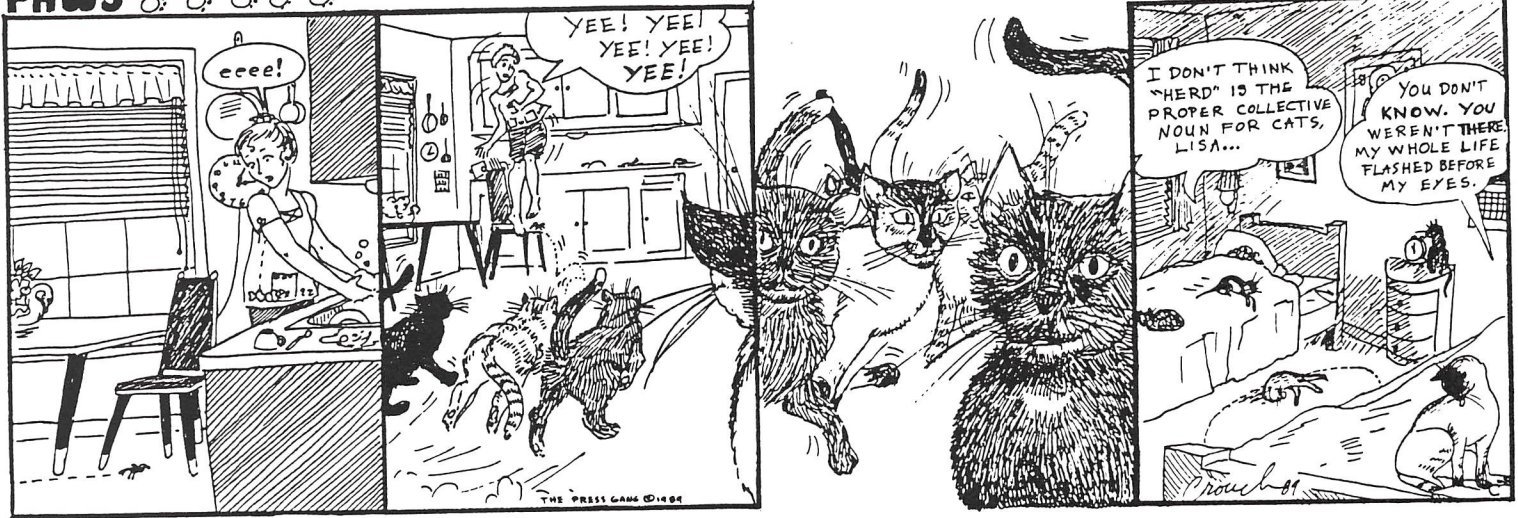
YOU WILL ALSO HAVE OBSERVED THAT I HAVE "BORROWED" SOME NECESSARY INFORMATION FROM THE MATRIX. I CONSIDERED THIS FITTING SINCE IT WAS MY PRISON FOR A TIME.

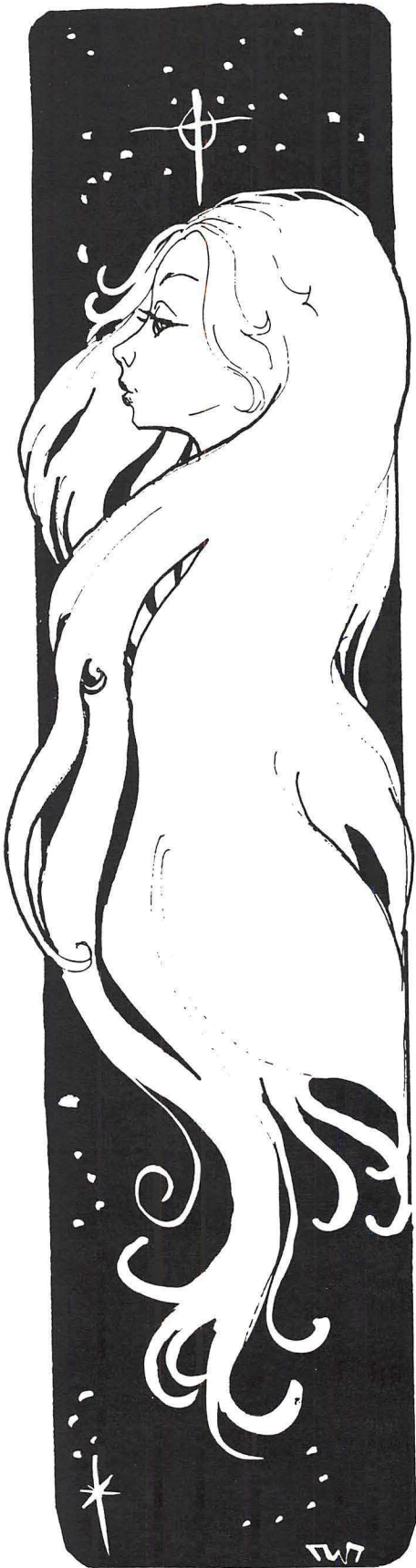
IF BY ANY CHANCE YOU SPEAK TO THE DOCTOR, PRAY SEND HIM MY REGARDS, AS I AM SURE YOU WILL. I HAVE SEVERAL MATTERS TO GO OVER WITH HIM.

UNTIL THEN, I REMAIN

YOUR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE MASTER





Lady Romana

I've never chosen my own company,
And I certainly didn't choose you.
A Time Lady fresh out of the Academy,
Who thinks she knows everything.

Romanadvoratrelundar;
What a name to stick on a child.
Long, hard to pronounce--typically Gallifreyan.
I knew I should have called you Fred.

We've been through a lot together.
First the Key to Time and the Black Guardian,
Then Daleks, Meglos, and a big green blob.
But now it's time to say good-bye.

Because you have a duty to do
That can't be ignored.
An entire race to free;
You're needed here.

And although I will miss you,
I can't keep you from your duty,
And with K9 to help you in your task,
I know you'll be superb.

But in spite of all that you learned,
You still can't make a decent cup of tea.

Melissa Mastoris

THE DOCTOR'S LAMENT

(to "Doctor Heckyll & Mr. Jive" by Men at Work)
by Lisa Conner

Oh the Doctor works late in his laboratory
Where things are not as they seem.
For the Doctor wishes nothing more desperately than
To escape this time-stream.
Singing songs as he tinkers with his TARDIS there
Thinks he's breaking new ground.
But then the Brig says, "Come, I've got a job for you--
See the monsters I've found!"

Oh, the Doctor solves mysteries and battles foes
It's just a hobby of his.
Got him stuck on Earth, his memory mixed-up
Doing the UNIT's biz.

And so it's off to work he goes
In the name of freedom--if not his OWN!

This is the story of the unhappy Doctor Three
Nice place to visit, but Earth's a BORING place to be!
This is the story of the unhappy Doctor Three
Why these aliens all want it is beyond the ken of me!

Not so bad on duty for the Brigadier
(Good fellow, if a fool)
All his vehicles are so much fun for racing in--
Why can't I have some too?
But just as I get matters firmly in my hand
(Never doubted I would!)
The Brigadier says, "Nonsense! Blow the lot to bits!"
That does a lot of good.

I say!
Xenophobia saves the day!
I love this world--but some of the PEOPLE...

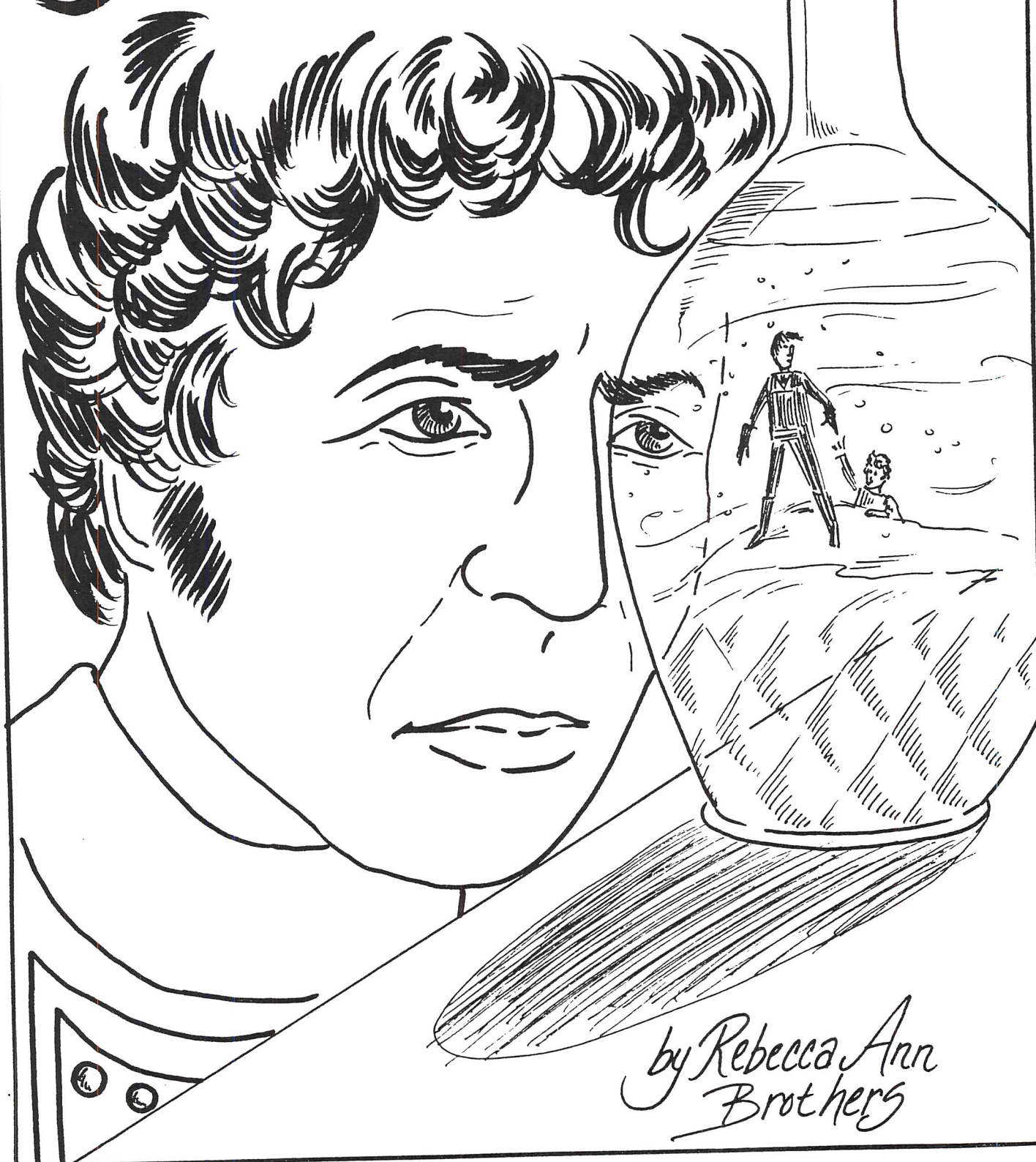
This is the story of the unhappy Doctor Three
Nice place to visit, but Earth's a place of idiocy!
This is the story of the unhappy Doctor Three
How these humans survived this long is beyond the ken of me!

Oh-oh! The planet's about to blow!
The Master may have won this time!
But hey! That's a minute or year away
To fret won't help--don't miss the beauty around you!

This is the story of the unhappy Doctor Three
Nice place to visit, but will it be for eternity?
This is the story of the unhappy Doctor Three
Exiled his body, but his soul's learning to fly free!
(repeat)



"SMALL CONSOLATION"



My brother is dead. Tarrant kept repeating those words to himself, but somehow they weren't quite sinking in, even though he had virtually been with Deeta when he died, felt his brother's life fade. But there was still a sense of unreality about it, and he wasn't sure how to cope.

Well, carry on with a stiff upper lip...just as though nothing out of the ordinary had occurred today.

It hadn't been too hard, on the flight deck and afterwards, to maintain the requisite good form: going after Vinnie had given him something to focus on, to keep the reaction at bay. But now, with Deeta avenged, it was harder to stand back from everything, so he'd beat a retreat to his cabin with a bottle of something from Vila's private stock. Not that he felt any better now, just a little numbed. That was the only way he knew to deal with this kind of pain.

There was bitter irony, too, in the knowledge that in another time it might have been Deeta he would have turned to for some comfort, some way of making sense of it all. This was going to take some getting used to, being alone now. It was some time since he'd spent any amount of time with Deeta, but he'd always felt a certain reassurance in knowing that, somewhere, he did have a big brother should he ever need him.

Who've I got now? was his morose thought as he topped off his glass.

"You were supposed to be on watch over an hour ago."

Oh hell. Just who he didn't need to deal with right now. "Screw the watch, Avon. I'm not taking it."

"I didn't really think you would," said Avon, silhouetted in the doorway.

Then why was he here? Tarrant wondered, watching as Avon came on into the room. He felt a sort of detached curiosity as Avon made his way over, not about to guess what Avon might want; he had enough trouble figuring him out when he was stone cold sober. All these months he'd been trying to get some handle on what made Kerr Avon tick, and the conclusion he'd arrived at was that some puzzles weren't meant to be cracked.

"It won't help, you know," Avon said, indicating the bottle.

Tarrant's mouth skewed with a parody of his usual smile. "Are you speaking from personal experience?"

"More than you've had."

Tarrant could believe that. Avon finding out about his Anna had only been the latest in a series of blows...and had Avon been doing what he was now, when the computer tech had locked himself away in his cabin after killing his Anna? It hadn't seemed like good form to intrude, and then Tarrant hadn't thought Avon was the sort to drown his sorrows; he hadn't thought anyone could matter that much to Avon. Odd thought, wasn't it, that it was Avon who had been particularly supportive when Deeta died...almost as if he really did understand.

"Guess we're all walking wounded on this ship," he said, reaching for the bottle again. "Bloody pitiful, the lot of us."

Avon withheld the bottle. "Misery loves company, so I've heard."

Tarrant gave him a toothy grin. "No wonder we're all such bosom chums, then. Give me the bottle, Avon."

"No. You've had enough."

"I'll decide when I've had enough." The hurt was still there, an all-pervasive ache just beneath the surface. "What do you care anyway?"

"You're in no condition to pilot this ship, should your services be required."

"Of, of course. It's the ship, not me: Tarrant doesn't count. Tarrant just flies the damned ship and does as he's told and doesn't get any ideas that anybody gives a damn about him! Avon can throw a tantrum any damned time he pleases and Tarrant just better be around to pick up the pieces!" He stopped for air, glaring at Avon--who hadn't so much as twitched an eyebrow. Tarrant looked away, down at his glass, and drained the contents in one swallow--then flung the glass at Avon, who deftly dodged it. "Dammit, Avon, my brother died today! Doesn't that count for anything?"

"Not a hell of a lot."

It was a pity he'd had so much to drink, Tarrant was thinking as he tried to get to his feet, because he would like, very much, to punch Avon's lights out right about now. "Why don't you just go to hell?"

A wry smile quirked Avon's mouth. "Oh, I reside there on a regular basis, Tarrant. That's why I know this sort of self-indulgence is pointless."

Tarrant shook his head in amazement. "Avon you are a real piece of work. You'll understand if I fail to give a damn what you think?" It was sheer idiocy to expect Avon to understand, to have any sympathy. The only reason he'd feigned concern before was because of the chance to get one up on Servalan. "Just let me be." He sank back into his chair, resting his head in his hands. He did not want to talk about this with anyone, to share it, least of all with this bastard.

"That doesn't help either," Avon said, and if Tarrant didn't know better he'd have sworn there was a faint note of understanding in Avon's voice--or, maybe, regret. What was he saying now? "...and no matter how much anger, regret and grief you summon up, Tarrant, nothing changes."

"And if it did, I'd be on the wrong ship?" Tarrant looked up again, wishing he had the knack of reading Avon. Once in a very great while he got the sense that he was getting close to some understanding of him, only to have it slip away. Sometimes he even thought it was a shame it turned out that way, as things might be a little easier around here if the two of them weren't forever rubbing each other the wrong way.

A faint smile touched Avon's mouth. "You'd be in the wrong universe altogether."

"Do you really believe that? That none of us has a chance?" Surely no one, even Avon, could be that much of a pessimist.

"What evidence do you have to the contrary?" Avon replied, making it sound rhetorical.

But Tarrant chose to reply all the same. "I've lost my brother today," he said slowly, "and it hur--it will take some time to get used to that...some part of me will never get used to it. The...the pain will always be there...only not as bad." I hope, he added to himself, and wondered why he was wasting his breath saying this to Avon. He glanced at him, to see how it was going over, but the other man's expression was as shuttered as ever. "We're still alive, Avon; that has to count for something."

"And I suppose you're going to add that, for example, the only way someone like Servalan can truly triumph is by destroying our hope," Avon said, a slightly mocking undertone in his voice.

Tarrant hadn't actually thought of it in those terms, but, "Yes. However foolish the concept may be to you, Avon, there is something in that. Isn't that sort of what Blake was doing, maybe the only real thing he was able to achieve: to give people hope?" Why did he keep blathering on like this? He could see it wasn't making the slightest impression on Avon--and only making him look a greater fool in all likelihood.

"Is that the sort of drivel your brother was prone to spouting?"

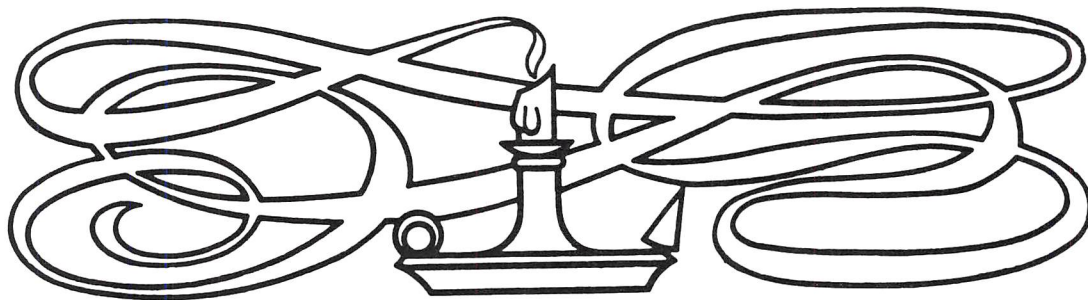
"I...Yes, I suppose it was, in a way." Deeta'd certainly had scant use for the Federation. "And it isn't drivel."

"No, of course it isn't," Avon said, in that smugly dismissive way he had. "Well, by all means stay here and wallow in simple-minded cliches; it's unlikely you'll be needed on the flight deck for quite some time." And without another word, Avon left, leaving Tarrant to wonder just what that had been all about.

Tarrant scowled at the door, shook his head. Deciphering the workings of Avon's mind was more than he felt up to at the moment. Now, where was the bottle? Tarrant looked around for it, futilely; Avon'd taken it. Damn him, what business was it of Avon's if he chose to drank himself into a comfortably numb stupor? It wasn't as if Avon had been overflowing with words of comfort and encouragement. He'd almost been deliberately provoking, in fact, making him think of all the...of all the things he needed to remember in order to start picking up the pieces.

Tarrant sat up a little straighter, letting that idea work itself out. Had that been Avon's intent? It would be a little hard to believe, wouldn't it, if Avon simply came along and offered his shoulder to cry on. Avon couldn't reach out to people like that, nor was it in Tarrant's nature to accept it. But this sort of roundabout approach achieved the same end, and didn't embarrass anybody.

Tarrant's smile was genuine now, though not his usual megawatt grin. He'd keep Avon's little secret for him, and maybe return the favor someday.



II

It was snowing again. At least that meant no patrols for awhile, Avon was thinking as he stood at the cave mouth, watching the snow drift down. He hoped it would stop before dawn, as he was anxious to get away from here; the rebels were just as eager for him to stay. Only because they didn't know what had really happened, of course; only because they were desperate for a unifying leader, and mistakenly thought they had one in him. They thought he was the natural successor to Blake.

A bitter smile twisted his lips, eyes suddenly blurred to the weather, as he considered the irony of that.

Closing his eyes and drawing a few calming breaths, fists unclenching, he felt the dawning rage/misery drain. It was gradually becoming easier to cope, but that pit was ever yawning before him. Sometimes its lure was so very appealing, too; fall into it, beyond anyone's reach to haul him back, and it would all finally be over.

What was the point of going on? Had there ever been one?

Memory supplied him with an answer: a man overflowing with life and a sense of purpose, who had sought to encompass him in that purpose, fire him with the same sense of zeal and sense of destiny. Who had died never knowing that he had at least succeeded in that.

"...Blake..."

"Avon?" A hand touched his shoulder and he started, turning to meet--Tarrant. The younger man looked at him with what seemed genuine concern, though of course Avon didn't believe it. "Are all you all right?"

Avon's look implied that was one of the dumber questions he'd heard lately.

Tarrant sighed. "Well, I've got all the gear we'll need. Now, if the weather will just cooperate."

Avon looked past him, to the pile of anoraks and camping equipment. They were going to cut out for Vanash, one of the trader cities on Gauda Prime, 20 kilometers south of these caverns. They had worked out that, allowing for the weather and Tarrant's bad leg, it would take them four to five days to get there, and had planned accordingly. The rebels had contacts there, and one of them had turned out to be an old mate of Tarrant's from his mercenary days. The man had arranged with Tarrant to get them off GP, no questions asked--and no blabbing about it to the rebels.

Something would probably go wrong, Avon supposed, but he couldn't stand staying here much longer. The memories alone were bad enough, but having Blake's rabble coming to look for him for their next move, trying to make him their new leader--he couldn't take that, not again. He'd never sought that responsibility, and certainly would not take it now. He'd killed their hero...and given them a martyr to rally more support.

But he didn't think they'd thank him for it, should they ever find out the truth.

"What do you suppose they'll do when they find out we've gone?" Tarrant said, sitting down opposite him and stretching his long legs out.

"Who cares?" Avon didn't look at him.

"We're the only ones left who know what happened."

As if he didn't know that, Avon thought. Sole survivors...nine people, three computers, two ships--and he and Tarrant were all that was left. Travis was long gone, and ORAC destroyed before Servalan could get her claws on it...and her, he'd finally got the bitch. When the rebels were rescuing him and Tarrant from her they had come face to face again, and she'd dared him to kill her--put the muzzle of his gun right to her breast, so certain of her power over him. There had been such an astonished look in her lovely predator's eyes when he'd pulled the trigger. She'd watched him kill Blake; how could she have thought he'd hesitate over her?

"You could stay," Avon told Tarrant.

"No I couldn't. My hands are hardly clean."

"You didn't know him."

"But I knew you."

"So did he. It didn't keep him alive." Nor Vila. Avon had always supposed he'd miss the little thief--his fool--but the reality of not having Vila around had been harder to grasp than he'd anticipated. Of course, he'd lost Vila long before they ever came to Gauda Prime.

He sighed, shifted position, wondering what twisted whim of fate had left him with this tiresome puppy. And why did Tarrant keep hauling him back from that pit?

"What are your plans when we get to Vanash?"

Tarrant blinked at him, blue eyes guileless. "Zimmer will provide us transport off this hellhole. I thought I told you that."

Avon smiled, the kind that didn't reach his eyes. "You did. It's the us and the we that I find hard to believe."

Tarrant shook his head. "You're a sad case, Avon."

Well, that was certainly true enough.

"And what is," his mouth quirked, "our destination to be?"

"Tyndor, I thought."

"Did you?" Well, a pirate planet was as good a place as any, he supposed, and felt a twinge of nostalgia as he remembered the way Jenna would ice him when he used that term--they were Free Trader bases, she would point out, never making it clear how there was a difference. "Going back to your old line of work then?"

"Why not? I did rather well at it."

"So you've said."

"You don't believe me?"

"Well now, it did strike me that you were a little too keen on convincing me." And why Tarrant should want to impress him was anybody's guess.

Tarrant produced one of his toothy grins. "Then you're in for a few surprises."

"Oh, good. We know how much I like surprises."

Tarrant shook his head, stood up and went to the cave mouth. The snow had stopped, and there was a pinkish glow to the east. He strapped on his backpack, held Avon's out to him. "Do we go?"

"To be smugglers, mercenaries?"

"It's what we're good at."

Speak for yourself, said Avon's expression. For him, a little boredom wouldn't come amiss. The revolution was over, so far as he was concerned; it had fallen at his feet with Blake. "I still have debts, Tarrant." For what might have been.

"Sometimes little wars accomplish more than big ones."

Meaning Blake had overreached his grasp? Well, maybe; but if anyone could have brought it off, Blake would have been the one.

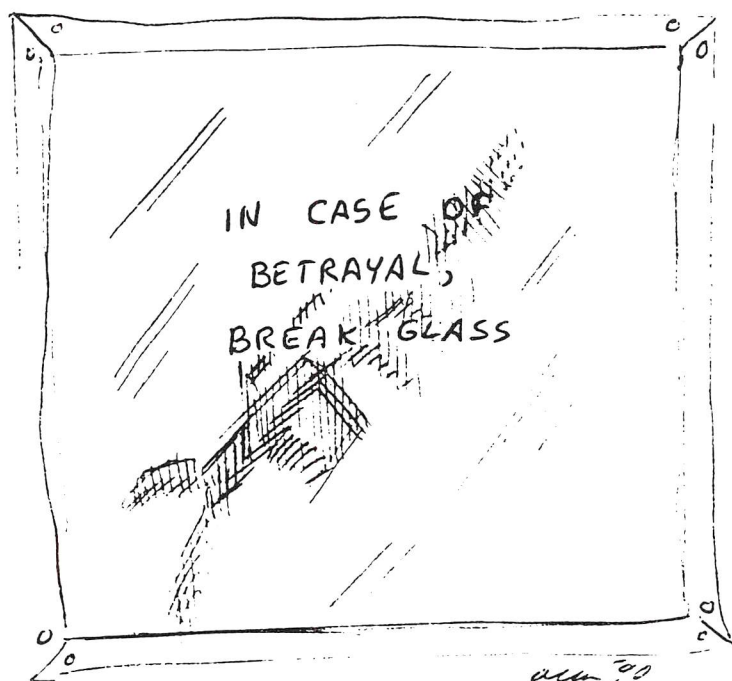
Avon took the backpack, put it on. "Why are you doing this?"

"I owe you. For Blake, and Deeta."

Avon nodded. "You'll regret it."

Tarrant grinned. "I expect so."

Avon shook his head, wondering how he'd never twigged to it before that Tarrant was a masochist. "Let's go," he said, and they stepped out into a world of white, heading for a new beginning.



SESTINA

by Patricia Dunn

Here's a track, dusty and wandering, used by the living,
Here's a pair of men, travelling companions of the road.
Strange pair--darkness and light, silence and song.
One's older than the other, his eyes and hair black as the night,
Look at his limp, which some say was given him by ghosts.
Beside him comes Myal, the golden-haired minstrel.

Myal carries that outlandish instrument which baffles an ordinary minstrel.

(Still, I wager he plays it well enough for his living.)
Listen, you'll hear a lively tune, no serenade for ghosts.
Now they've come to an inn by the side of the cold road.
The lame one needs rest and lodging for the night,
Myal will buy their supper with his craft of song.

Myal Lemyal has woven legend and dream into his song,
Look how the dullards stare entranced at our fair minstrel.
Listen to his tale of Ghyste Mortua, city of forlorn night,
Hear how its dark streets are untrod by the feet of the living,
Take heed of the warning to avoid at all costs the desolate road
That leads to this realm of ghosts.

His companion seems amused by this talk of ghosts,
He half smiles as he listens to the song,
His dark eyes veil themselves, look out on another road,
Far distant from the one he has travelled with the minstrel.
He gives no name, but it is whispered all the same: "Parl Dro, killer
of the dead-living!"
And the farm-folk huddle closer, glance fearfully out at the night.

For who can know the terrors held by the night?
And who would cheerfully choose the company of a killer of ghosts,
Unless he himself were safe in the midst of the true-living?
At last there comes an end to the song,
(For more than one wine-flask has been drunk by the minstrel),
And morning will come all too soon, and with it the waiting road.

Here's the rising sun on that same road,
Dispersing the shadows of night,
Here is our motley-clad minstrel,
Here is the black-mantled nemesis of ghosts,
Here is a new song,
A tribute to the living.

They will roam on, strong against night-ghosts,
Myal's magic lies in his song, as does that of any minstrel,
Their road now leads them among the living.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: A "sestina is a poetic form dating back to the Renaissance. It is structured around six verses of six lines each, followed with a three-line verse at the poem's conclusion. Each line of a verse concludes with one of the six "key-words", which are repeated through the poem in a complex manner. The final verse includes all six of the "key-words".

BEYOND TERMINALS

Larc Levy

"Adric," called Nyssa, "don't play with the stuff on my desk!"

The little boy looked up guiltily and put the file folder back down. Nyssa scooped him up into her arms.

"Where's your father, then? He's supposed to be keeping an eye on you."

"I dunno," replied Adric, putting a thumb into his mouth.

Just then, Olvir rushed into the room. He gave his wife a kiss as he took their son from her.

"Sorry, Darling, I was checking in the first ship from Notlob Two and he just wandered away. Missed his Mum, I expect." Olvir grinned, and Nyssa smiled back.

"Yes, well, I've got lots of work to do, and--" she broke off as Olvir's words suddenly came back to her. "First ship? I thought they were only sending one?"

"The epidemic grew," Olvir shrugged. "Bor's opening up one of the extra wards."

"How many are they sending?"

"Three."

Nyssa's heart sank. "Three? It'll take days, maybe weeks to get through that many Lazar victims!"

"Oh, you'll manage. Valgard and Bor are almost as good as you, they can handle some patients. Sigurd's a lot of help, too."

Ever since Nyssa had taken over the running of the space hospital, things had been going much more smoothly. The Hydromel--an anti-radiation drug that the Vanir needed to stay alive on Terminus--was being produced in mass quantities. And the Vanir themselves, who had been serving on Terminus instead of in prison, were fed and educated. Some had even been trained by Nyssa in the care of Lazar victims. They were grateful that she had stayed behind to help instead of going off with the Doctor.

"We haven't had this many people since before Adric was born," said Nyssa. "That was two years ago!"

"We'll do fine," insisted Olvir. He gave her another kiss and left with their young son.

* * * * *

On the second ship from Notlob Two was a humanoid who wasn't a native of the planet. In fact, he was quite different from the rest of the passengers.

He sat in the back of a small theatre where the patients were being shown a film. Nyssa had prepared it to show the patients what the treatment of Lazar's consisted. Most people were still a bit wary of the word "radiation", even though the correct dose would cure them of an otherwise fatal disease. Knowing what to expect tended to put their minds at ease.

Most of the patients were in the early stages of Lazar's. It was spotted very quickly now, especially on planets where an epidemic was taking place. Every suspected carrier was immediately sent to Terminus, Inc.

A Notlobian woman turned to the stranger next to her. "Will it hurt, do you think?" she asked conversationally. The man looked at her angrily.

"I don't know," was his curt reply.

"Excuse me," huffed the woman. Her face was pale because of the disease, but apparently she was still in good spirits. The stranger wasn't. He took a deep breath to combat the waves of dizziness. Closing his eyes in pain, he missed the film credits, most particularly the name Nyssa Of Traken. Had he seen it, he would have recognized the name instantly. And if Nyssa had seen his face, pale as it was, she would have known it, too. It was the face of the one being who had hurt her more than anyone in the entire universe.

It was the face of the Master.

* * * * *

Nyssa smiled at the young girl who was in her office. She was nearly the last of the people from the first ship.

"You're only in stage two," Nyssa told her, "after only one dose of the radiation, you should be cured."

"Great," smiled the girl. Nyssa walked her to the door, and called, "Next!" Bor, who was in the waiting room, smiled at her. "You're through," he said, "Valgard and I are taking care of the last two."
"Super," Nyssa sighed, relieved. "When's the next ship due?"
"In an hour. Go get something to eat," Bor encouraged, "we don't want you getting sick."
"Right."

Nyssa met her husband and son in the cafeteria.
"You've been working too hard," Olvir said, seeing the dark circles under her eyes.
"No, actually, it's kind of exciting. Of course, not as much as travelling with the Doctor was."
"From what you've said, travelling with the Doctor did you more harm than good. Wasn't your planet destroyed?"
"That wasn't the Doctor's fault. In fact, I would've been destroyed, too, if it hadn't been for him."
"You were almost killed many times, though. It's safer for you to be here. I'm glad you stayed. Aren't you?"
"Of course. But I do miss him. And Tegan."
Olvir looked at Adric and smiled. "Next time we'll have a girl, then."
"Our Adric's too much like the original, Darling, I don't know if you could handled a baby Tegan, too!" laughed Nyssa. Her son grinned up at her, his black eyes as alive with mischief as the boy's whom he had been named for.

* * * * *

An hour later, the second ship boarded onto Terminus. Nyssa was handed a chart for all the patients on board.
"Are you certain we've got enough space?" she asked Valgard.
"Positive."
Bor came over. "Docking proceeding normally. You get to the primary lab, I'll take the secondary." He ran off to get his lab jacket.
"You'd better take the third, Valgard, after you and Sigurd make sure all the patients are aboard," Nyssa instructed.
"Right."
Nyssa went over to her lab, and began to look at the data on her first patient.

Out in the docking room, the double doors had opened, and the second batch of Lazar victims filed through to receive their first examinations. One by one they would go into a lab and be analyzed as to how much radiation they would need.

Nyssa got through her first five patients easily enough as they were only lightly infected. It was when the sixth, a little boy of about ten, came into her lab that she sighed. He'd had to be wheeled in as he was in the fourth stage.

"Why didn't they send you on the first ship?" Nyssa asked the child. He just looked at her.

"Sigurd," Nyssa called on the telecomm, "I've got a bad one; he'll have to be taken for treatment immediately. Come and take over the primary for me."

As Nyssa wheeled the boy out, Sigurd came in and picked up her list of names.

"John Smith," he called. A few moments later, a man with a dark beard walked in. His manner was cautious, and his eyes were sharp. Sigurd smiled at him.

* * * * *

Nyssa took the boy to the yellow line that marked the end of the radiation zone. "Garm," she called. The Garm was a beast with an incredible affinity to radiation. Before Nyssa and the Doctor had arrived on Terminus, he had been forced to take the Lazar victims for their dosage. But the Doctor had freed him of his "chains", and out of gratitude he remained with Nyssa to help.

The giant animal came over and picked up the boy. He carried him off to the radiation source as Nyssa looked on sadly. When a person--especially a child--had reached stage four, even the treatment might fail.

* * * * *

Sigurd finished his brief examination of the Master. "Hmmm, your double hearts should have protected you against Lazar's, yet they don't seem to help as much as they should. You're only in stage one, but it's so much more intense than it should be."

"I've been through several traumatic experiences," said the Master drily.

"I see."

"Look, they will send me back to Notlob Two, won't they? I left something very important there, and I must go back!"

"Of course," said Sigurd, slightly amused, "where else would we send you?"

The Master heaved a sigh of relief. If he couldn't get back to where he left the TARDIS, he'd be lost. He did have an emergency device to get him to it, but it used an incredible amount of energy. And energy was something he was pretty short of at the moment.

"Through that door, to ward F," Sigurd instructed. "When we call you, the Garm will take you to the radiation, and..."

"I know," the Master cut him off, "I saw the film."

* * * * *

Nyssa headed back to the primary lab, her mind still on the child that she'd left with the Garm. She didn't see the man until they were a foot away from each other. They looked at each other at the same time.

Nyssa stifled a scream. In a flash she remembered all the horrible things he'd done to her.

He'd stolen the mind of her step-mother Kassia, then killed her.

He'd stolen the body of her father, Tremas.

He'd caused a spread of entropy that had obliterated her planet, leaving her as the only survivor.

"You," she gasped, unable to believe it.

"What a coincidence," smiled the Master, "we've both got Lazar's." He knew she wasn't with the Doctor, so he figured he had nothing to fear from the girl.

Nyssa suddenly looked calm. "I don't have it," she said. She smiled, a cold smile, not her usual sweet and gentle one. "I run this place. I operate it."

"Do you," the Master said. He felt another wave of dizziness that he wasn't sure was from the disease.

"Yes. Looks like you need some strong treatment. Better go to your ward and rest," she said coldly. She walked past him and around the corner.

When Nyssa was sure she was out of sight of the Master, she leaned against the wall and tried to control her shaking.

It's him, she thought. She remembered how he'd made Adric a prisoner in Castrovalva. She remembered how he'd killed Tegan's favorite aunt. Most of all, she remembered how he'd made the Doctor fall off of the radioscope, causing his near-fatal fourth regeneration. And of course, there was Traken.

Somehow, the Master had hurt everyone Nyssa had ever loved.

Well, he wasn't going to hurt Olvir, or their Adric, that much she knew.

Nyssa thought about radiation. She thought about accidents. She thought for a long time.

By the time the third ship had arrived, Nyssa had composed herself enough to head back to the lab. Even though the Master was aboard, she did have work to do.

* * * * *

Even with the Vanir helping, it was late when all three ships were checking in and the patients examined. Most of the workers went to their quarters, exhausted.

But when Nyssa didn't return to the rooms she and her family shared, Olvir left the sleeping Adric and went to her lab, hoping to find her.

When he came into the room, he saw his wife sitting at her desk crying.

"What happened?" He ran over to put a comforting arm around her shoulders.

Nyssa reminded him of the past she rarely spoke of. She brought up the Master and what he'd done to the Doctor, Tegan and Adric. About Castrovalva, Logopolis and Traken, and the Concorde at Heathrow. About her parents and planet, all lost because of the Master's meglomaniacal ways.

Olvir agreed that it all was pretty tragic, and said so. But he added, "Why are you talking about it now? And why are you crying?"

"Because he's here. He's got Lazar's, and they sent him here."

"I'll kill him." Olvir's voice was calm.

"How? He's a Time Lord."

"Too much radiation can't be good for anyone, except the Garm."

"I've thought of that. But I couldn't do it, Olvir, I've seen enough death!"

"You'd let him live? What about Adric? What about all the other people and planets that he might ruin?"

"It doesn't matter," sighed Nyssa, "he's like the Doctor, and he's probably gone by now."

Olvir saw how tired she was. "Come on," he said gently, "you need some sleep."

* * * * *

Contrary to what Nyssa believed, the Master hadn't left. He'd gotten his first radiation treatment and was resting in Ward F with nineteen other men. The thought of escape had crossed his mind, but he didn't want to leave with any traces of the disease left in his system.

Oddly enough, the Master felt a little frightened. He knew how easily the girl could kill him. She certainly had enough reason to want to.

But she didn't know about his emergency device. He took it out of his pocket and began to make some minor adjustments.

* * * * *

"Where's Nyssa?" asked Sigurd as he opened the doors to the labs. Olvir smiled.

"She didn't feel well last night," he said truthfully. "She's sleeping in. But she did ask me to make sure that John Smith got his second treatment this morning."

"Fine."

When the two Vanir had reached Ward F, the Master had hidden his device deep in his pocket. It was small, but very powerful.

"Time for your treatment, Mr. Smith," Olvir said cheerfully.

"Now?" asked the Master, surprised.

"Yes. Lady Nyssa's orders." Olvir was pleased to see the Master wince.

* * * * *

Nyssa pulled on a dress, kissed Adric, and ran out the door. She knew who had turned off her alarm clock, and she knew why.

Hurrying into the bio-lab, she grabbed a vial of Hydromel. But before taking it, she went to Ward F. As she suspected, the Master was gone.

"Too late," she hissed, and ran off, drinking the anti-radiation drug.

Partially, Nyssa hoped that she was too late. She hoped that Olvir had killed the Master. But the other part of her was horrified. She had never wanted to kill anyone before, not like this.

She ran over the yellow line into the radiation zone. She didn't ring for the Garm, for she knew the way quite well.

The Master stood by the radiation source, feeling the apparatus in his pocket. Yes, with the help of the radiation it would get him back to the TARDIS. After he was rid of the disease, of course.

Olvir pulled the switch that they had built to control the intensity of the radiation.

"No," called Nyssa as she ran over. But Olvir had pulled it.

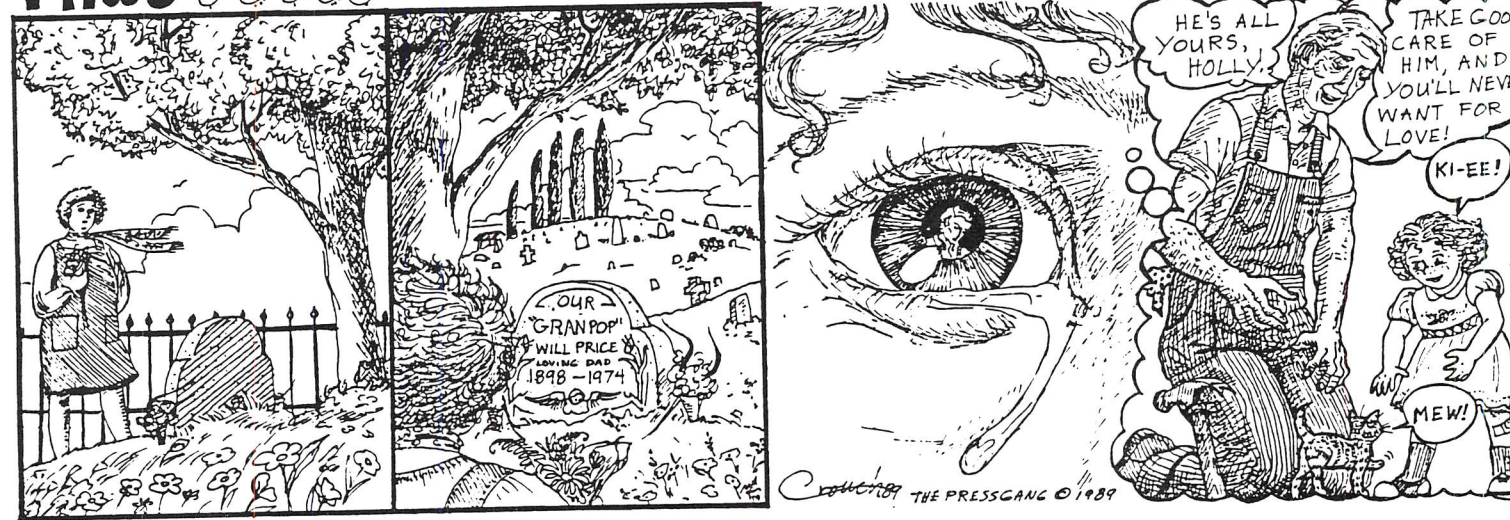
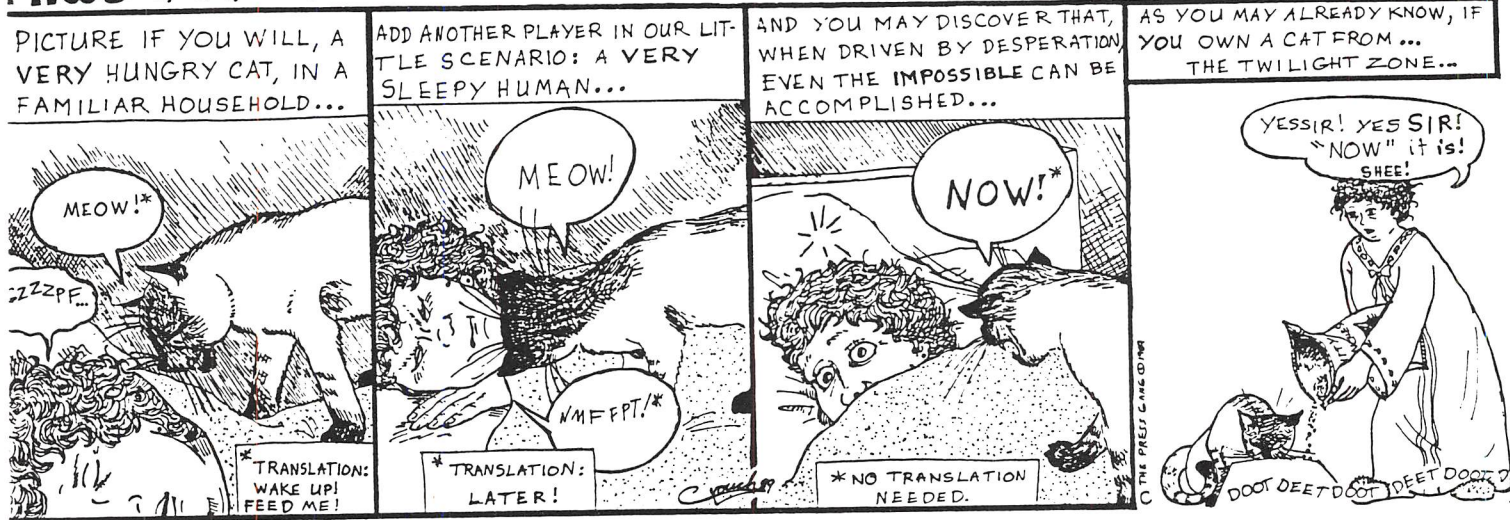
The two of them watched as the Master's face twisted in agony. Suddenly his eyes opened and looked directly into Nyssa's. She stared back, unafraid. As they held each other's gaze, he reached into his pocket.

"He's got a gun," breathed Olvir. He pulled Nyssa's arm, and pushed onto the ground, covering her with his own body.

Upon hearing the unmistakable sound of the Master's laughter, the two looked up in time to see him fade away. His device had worked.

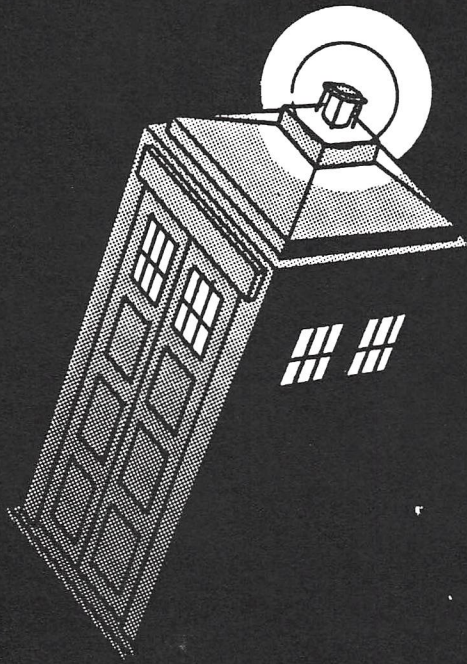
"He's gone," said Olvir triumphantly.

"Yes," said Nyssa softly, "but he's still alive."



THE ELDRITCH HORROR

by Rebecca Ann Brothers



art by Tim Lindsev

A desolate landscape stretched beneath a pale rose sky. It was eerily beautiful in its starkness, with outcroppings of black rock that had been sandblasted into surreal sculpture. A hot, dry wind blew over the plain, stirring the sand and piling it higher against the ruined remains of what must once have been a magnificent structure. A three-eyed lizard creature crawled over a massive column lying across the courtyard; patches of geometric-patterned tile could be glimpsed here and there. One wall still stood, sporting an elaborate mural. It was eroded by the blowing sand, but some images were still clear. Reptilian creatures were shown hunting, feasting, and holding court; clad in gorgeous robes and sparkling with jewels and precious metals. And always in attendance were some creatures with an amphibious look, bulbous-eyed and warty. Other ruins spread out around this building, all less impressive and more thoroughly obscured by the sand. The city stretched off to the horizon, but except for the small lizards that darted about, there were no signs of life. And no sound but for the soft moan of the wind...

* * * * *

Now this was what life was all about, thought Daniel Rafferty as he refilled the wine glass of his companion. Good food and drink, a lovely lady to share it with, and the night full of promise.

The young woman sipped her wine, smiled at him. "But you still haven't told me what you do, Danny." "Can't you guess?" Rafferty said, with a smile that momentarily transformed his rather ordinary features. "Something exciting, something dangerous."

"Absolutely. You could call my field"--how to put it?--"creative acquisition." There, that didn't sound too bad, nicely innocuous.

Someone cleared their throat behind him.

He turned, looking up at an associate of his. "I knew this was too good to last," he sighed, and was not cheered to see the way his dinner companion was eyeing the new arrival. All right, so the guy was tall, dark, and had a face with all those planes and angles women seemed to like; what was the big deal about high cheekbones? And maybe his hair was dark and curling and tumbled over his forehead, and his eyes were a startling shade of blue. Him, all he had to offer in the way of packaging was average everything: height, build, looks. His hair was light brown, worn in a tousled mop; his eyes were dark green and seldom missed anything, but rarely drew oohs and aahs.

"Danny, aren't you going to introduce me to your friend?"

Rafferty scowled at her. "No." He looked back at his friend. "So what is it now?"

"We have a job," Allan Michael Travis told him, smiling. "You're needed to...creatively acquire something."

"What, now? Can't I even--"

"No. Pay your bill and come on."

There was no point in arguing, Rafferty knew. He rummaged in various pockets, only turning up a portion of the money required. "I'm a little short."

Travis looked like he was going to make some smart remark for a second, but then he just dropped a few more credits on the table. "Now, let's get going," he said, flashing a smile at Rafferty's date that she'd probably live on for the rest of her life, and hustling his colleague on out.

"Creative acquisition?" Travis shook his head, grinning.

"It's a funny habit I've got, not coming right out and telling everyone I'm a thief."

"You never know, some women might find that interesting."

Rafferty just grunted. As they were on a tramrail heading straight for Restiri's spaceport, the world out of which they operated, it seemed like a good idea to inquire as to where they were going, and what they were supposed to do once they got there. So he did.

"Our first stop is Destran," Travis told him. "And we're to find a key."

"A key? A key to what?"

"Well, I won't know until I've got it."

Typical. They were off on another madcap caper, no one but Travis knowing why or for what. Rafferty bet they didn't even have a client. "Well, you can just count me out," he said as they made their way across the landing field to where their ship, Recovery, waited. "I'd probably just get killed or arrested, and you wouldn't care either way, 'cause that would just mean more profits for you to hog." He made a move to turn away, but Travis caught him by the arm, and ignoring protests, propelled him on up the boarding ramp and into the ship.

Besides Travis and Rafferty, there were three more members of the Recovery crew, and they were all on the flight-deck, preparing the ship for take-off. These people were all members of the Camaraldi Guild (pirates/smugglers/merchant traders--the Guild covered a number of sins in the eyes of the Authorities), coming to this life from various backgrounds.

Kimri Jahd, for instance, seated now at the flight controls. She had been a space fleet pilot, but had grown dissatisfied with the direction her career was taking. Although she never seemed to entirely approve of the capers they went on, she did appreciate having a say in things, and had some influence with Travis. She was fairly tall, slender, with features that had an elegant beauty to them. Sleek chestnut hair was drawn back and gathered in a braid falling down her back, and her eyes were a warm amber, with pupils like a cat's. "Our course is plotted and set," she told Travis as he took the co-pilot seat beside her.

"Good. Garin, have we got take-off clearance?"

"Just approved for the next twenty minutes," said Garin Dalvihn, their second specialist in theft--although in Rafferty's opinion he was just an ambitious pickpocket. It didn't help that he was also very young and good looking; taller than Travis, with a more obviously muscular build. His copper hair was brushed back from his face, and his gray eyes were evidence that he shared Kimri's heritage. On their homeworld it was common for transactions to be conducted via barter; Garin had simply never bothered with handing over something else in exchange for what he took, and had subsequently spent some time in juvenile detention.

"When do we find out what this is all about?" was what Anna Jones wanted to know, which surprised Rafferty. He had gotten the impression that Travis had taken a fancy to this former intelligence agent; if even she was in the dark, they must be after something extraordinary. It was easy to see why she elicited their leader's interest: not too tall, generous figure, hair tumbling in dark waves to her shoulders, eyes to match. She couldn't be beat for gathering and coordinating information--even if she had originally employed those skills in an attempt to bring them to justice.

Travis was smiling at her, saying, "Just be patient, Anna. If I find what I'm looking for on Destran I'll explain everything."

"And if you don't find this key?" Garin said. "What then?"

"Well then, there won't be anything to explain, will there?"

Again, typical. The way the one-time archaeologist so skillfully kept things to himself, it was a wonder his colleagues had ever discovered that he had acquired the deplorable habit of latching onto some alien artifact, and later selling it on the black market. After he had been caught, as Rafferty understood it, the psychiatrists who had examined him had decided he must be suffering from some mental problem: he refused to see that he had done anything wrong, and the only reason he gave for having done it at all was he had probably just wanted the money. They had recommended that he be put in a rehabilitation program. Travis had wasted no time in making a clean getaway.

Having experienced a couple of those programs, Rafferty didn't blame him.

Himself, environmental pressures--in the form of boredom back home at Dogstar Base--had driven him to thieving. He supposed he could have done a lot of other things, but why fight one's natural aptitudes? True, he had been arrested a time or two, and since teaming with Travis his life had been placed in frequent jeopardy; but for all his grumping he really didn't have anything better to do. He supposed there was a moral in there somewhere.

"All right then," Travis said, checking to make certain everything was in working order, "let's go. Take us up, Kimmie."

So, here they were, bound for the gods knew where. Rafferty just hoped there'd be something nice at the end of the trip. And that he'd be in some condition to enjoy it.

* * * * *

The Doctor looked up from the TARDIS controls as the inner door opened and Tegan came in. She was still looking a little blue about leaving Nyssa behind, and he wished he knew of some way to cheer her up. His own spirits were a little dismal, as he kept thinking he ought to be used to leaving friends behind, that the pain of parting ought to lessen through repetition. That hadn't proved to be the case, however.

"Everything's in working order," he said, more cheerfully than he felt. "Any special place you'd like to go?"

Tegan's shrug was indifferent.

The Doctor frowned, stuffed his hands in his pockets. "She wanted to stay on Terminus," he said. "She knew what sort of life she was choosing."

"We could have talked her out of it," Tegan said, her tone a little sullen.

"No. We had to accept her decision." He went over to her. "I miss her too, Tegan, but if I've learned anything in my lives, it's that you have to let the past be."

"And just forget?"

His smile was sad, wistful. "No. Remember when it's not so painful."

Tegan nodded, almost managed a smile. "So...where're we off to?"

He knew her cheerfulness was as forced as his, but was glad to see her making the effort. "The choices are unlimited." He went back to the console. "There's a nice little world called Destran that you might find interesting. Their bazaar's rather famous, and if you get tired of shopping there's lots more to do. I remember Sarah Jane enjoyed our holiday there."

"Sarah Jane?"

"Umm, one of your predecessors. I ought to introduce you sometime."

"I suppose it would be as good as any."

"Your enthusiasm's a bit overwhelming," he remarked as he set the coordinates, but he was smiling. A few days on Destran would be just the thing for all of them. "By the way, where's Turlough got to?"

"How should I know? Sneaking around somewhere, I suppose."

"Now, Tegan. He's done nothing to warrant such an attitude on your part."

"Hasn't he?" She shrugged. "Maybe it's just that he's an alien."

The Doctor raised his eyebrows at her.

Tegan made a face. "You're different."

"Oh yes. I only have two hearts and change bodies every so often. Nothing unusual about that."

She smiled. "I guess I've gotten used to you."

"And you'll get used to Turlough."

Tegan didn't look any too sure about that, but the Doctor was certain she would manage to get along with Turlough. He had to admit he had a lot of questions about that young man, but he was confident that, in time, all would be made clear.

Turlough was in his room, lying on the bed and looking at the blackened crystal through which the Black Guardian had communicated with him. There had been no messages since he had been given that ultimatum to kill the Doctor. He wasn't sure if that was a curse or a blessing. It made him hope that the Black Guardian couldn't find him now, but he couldn't put any real enthusiasm behind that. The ultimatum had not been given lightly: if he failed to kill the Doctor this time, the Black Guardian would find him--of that he was certain.

He wondered if this awful task would have been any easier if the Doctor had been the evil being the Black Guardian had claimed. The question was really academic now. The Doctor was not evil, and Turlough couldn't kill him.

But, if he didn't kill the Time Lord, then he was dead.

He wished he could talk to the Doctor about it, tell him everything, and see if the Time Lord could find a solution to this dilemma. But he was afraid to make such a confession. Even if the Doctor understood all the circumstances, he'd probably never trust him again. Turlough wasn't quite certain how it had come about, but the Doctor's trust and friendship had become rather important to him.

There was a knock at the door, and Tegan poked her head in. "We've landed, if you're interested."

Turlough hastily stuffed the crystal in a pocket. "Landed where?"

"Somewhere called Destran. We're going to see the sights. Want to come along?"

He didn't really, but got up and reached for his coat. Maybe something would happen to change his circumstances, one way or the other.

* * * * *

Rafferty knocked on the door of Travis' cabin, then entered without waiting for an invitation. "Hi. We're back."

Travis looked up from his desk. "Hi, yourself."

Rafferty went over to the desk, craning his neck to get a look at some interesting looking papers spread out there. "Do you want to know what we found?"

The Recovery had landed on Destran earlier this day, and Travis had sent his crew out to find a man named Alhazred, who was probably posing as some sort of fortune teller. He still hadn't explained what they were after, nor what this Alhazred had to do with it, but as they seemed committed they hadn't--yet--kicked up a fuss. Travis was counting on them remembering that, while he might take them into hazardous situations, there was usually something valuable to be gained. This time might be different, in terms of monetary profit; for him personally, thought, it was very important.

"Well?" He looked inquiringly at Rafferty. "Don't keep me in suspense."

"This Al--?"

"Alhazred."

"Yeah. Well, he has a booth down in the bazaar; calls himself a necromancer and has people troop through his tent and gaze in the crystal ball." Rafferty shrugged. "The usual scam." He reached towards the papers on the desk, tentatively; when Travis didn't bat his hand away, the thief riffled through them: notes, sketches, diagrams. "So what's all this?"

"Research. It may help us find what we're after."

"When do we find out what that is?"

Travis sat back in his chair, arms folded, dark brows drawn together in a thoughtful frown. "Okay. Sit down."

Rafferty perched on the edge of a couch inset in a bulkhead. "What about the others?"

"You can fill them in later." Travis leaned forward again. "You know that I'm an archaeologist--"

"A discredited one, yes."

Travis smiled. "Be that as it may...I used to work with Dr. Pamela Drury." He shuffled through the papers, came up with a photograph, handed it to Rafferty. "That's Pamela and me at our dig on Katarahn, about...four years ago."

Rafferty studied the picture. The Allan Travis captured there looked a little younger, perhaps a little more relaxed; maybe it was the way he had an arm around the woman beside him, standing at the entrance to some tomb. Pamela Drury, four years ago at least, was tall and willowy, with blonde hair falling to her shoulders and across her forehead; he couldn't tell what color her eyes were. The pair of them looked dusty and sweaty, and were grinning like kids on Christmas morning.

"Was it an important find?" he said, handing the photograph back, watching the way Travis looked at it. There was an expression there that Rafferty hadn't seen before.

"Fairly important. I found a bracelet there, nothing very special really--gold, some interesting etching." Travis shrugged. "I needed some money and knew a collector who'd pay generously; didn't see the harm..." A barely perceptible sigh. "Well, Pamela found out somehow. We...parted company, rather violently."

"Is she the one who turned you in?"

Travis shook his head. "In fact, she was about the only one of my colleagues," his mouth twisted wryly at that word, "who wasn't out to lynch me." He put the photograph away. "The thing is, Danny, she came to Restiri looking for me, and she told he a story..."

Some thousands of years ago, a particular quadrant of the galaxy had been ruled by a reptilian race called the Paanmaat. If they were not entirely benevolent, neither were they wholly despotic. Rich and powerful, they had seemed invulnerable; and yet virtually overnight their civilization had collapsed. Some catastrophe had so completely overwhelmed the homeworld, Paanmaatsaan, that it was as if it had been swallowed up, so thoroughly was it lost.

With all ties to the homeworld abruptly severed, it had just been a matter of time before the empire as a whole had crumbled, both from disputes among the bureaucratic leaders left behind, and from rebellion among the peoples over whom they had held dominion. Eventually, the great Paanmaat Empire was little more than a footnote in the histories of many lesser civilizations--all more deserving of obscurity.

Such, at any rate, was the opinion held by certain archaeologists for whom the Paanmaats were a major obsession.

Pamela Drury, for instance.

Travis had found the subject of the Paanmaats intriguing, and could certainly understand how otherwise sensible people could be possessed of a near fanaticism about assembling that particular puzzle. From a more practical viewpoint, it went without saying that any really important discovery regarding that civilization

would bring substantial rewards. Not that financial, or even professional accolades, had been behind the intensity Pamela'd brought to the search.

"I wanted to solve the mystery," she had told him, in that smoky, noisy bar on Restiri.

Travis had felt a twinge of shock when he saw her, not that she'd changed all that much. Her hair was a little shorter, she looked a little thinner, but otherwise was much the same as when he'd last seen her on Katarahn. No, it was the eyes, still as green as ever, but with a haunted look that hadn't been there before. They would meet his for a few seconds, then dart off, searching the darker corners of the room. What had her so spooked?

"And have you?" He watched her face as she answered; the eyes seeking the shadows, a hand tightening on the water-beaded glass and raising it to her lips, bolting the liquor (and Pamela had never been a drinker), the mouth twisting with a humorless smile.

"Oh yes, Allan, I solved the mystery. At the price of six lives." She reached for the bottle, splashed more amber liquid in her glass, stirred the ice with a finger. "We were on Persepheron--"

"Who is 'we'?"

"Most of our old crew--Kara, Tommy, the others. And Alhazred."

"Who?"

"Alhazred. He's an amateur, a hanger-on really. But he knew his stuff." She laughed, as humorlessly as her smile. "Oh god he knew his stuff." She knocked back the fresh drink, studying his face as though seeking an answer there. "Why do I always hook up with some mercenary bastard?" She didn't seem to really expect an answer. "Like I said, we were on Persepheron, and we found some scrolls in a temple there, just stuffed in a jar and forgotten."

"What were they? A complete history of the Paanmaat Empire?" He had spoken lightly, smiling, trying to take the edge off the atmosphere.

"Just about," Pamela said, still dead serious. "At least in relation to the Persepheron culture. Someone had even gone to the trouble of drawing a starmap. It was crude, fanciful, but the coordinates were very specific."

"You found Paanmaatsaan."

Her brows quirked, regarding him through the smoky haze. "You don't sound surprised."

"Why should I be? You were always good at your work, and the Paanmaat culture has always been your favorite obsession."

That ironic smile tugged at her mouth again. "Do you know that old proverb: Be careful what you wish for, you might get it?"

"Paanmaatsaan wasn't quite what you expected then?"

"Oh, it was a real prize, Allan. Just like you."

"What happened?" he had asked, ignoring the bitterness in her voice. There was nothing to be gained by rehashing the past.

The discovery of Paanmaatsaan wasn't something you just announced to the galaxy at large, not until you were absolutely certain of what you had found. Pamela hadn't even shared the information with all of her team--at Alhazred's suggestion. She had picked six that she really trusted, told them they were going to follow a clue uncovered in the scrolls, and the eight of them had set out for the world indicated on the starmap as being the homeworld of the Paanmaats.

At first, the planet upon which they landed didn't seem all that different from a dozen others that Pamela had explored. But, there was something: the air of utter desolation, the sheer extent and age of the ruins.

"It felt right somehow," Pamela said. She looked at him. "Do you know that feeling of utter conviction, the certainty that you have found something wonderful?"

"Yes."

"Hmm. Maybe that's how you feel when you steal something of exceptional value."

He thought that was uncalled for, but let it pass. "So what did you find? Wonderful things?"

That wry smile again. "A key, Allan. We found a key."

"To what?"

She shrugged. "Ask Alhazred." She sighed, sank back into her chair, exhausted. "We had been there about a week, week and a half. Setting up camp, doing all the preliminaries. There was nothing really definite, no sign saying: Welcome to Paanmaatsaan. But I know that's what it was."

"Quit beating around the bush, Pamela. What the hell happened?"

"Do you know the legend of what happened to them?"

Travis sighed. "The most prevalent one is that they were dabbling in matters 'mortal beings were not permitted to know'," a deprecating little smile quirked his mouth. "They're supposed to have unleashed supernatural forces which destroyed them."

"You don't sound as if you put much credence in that."

He shrugged. "I've seen some pretty strange things, but never anything that couldn't be explained. All superstition does is obscure and distort reality."

"You may be right." She ran a hand through her hair. "All I know is that we went into this temple." A faraway look came into her eyes as she set the scene for him. "Outside it's all sand piled against columns and blocks, a section of wall here still standing, another part crumbling and half-buried. A magnificent mural...But there's this one building, the temple, still intact. The sand's piled all the way up the steps, blocking the entry; it took us four days to dig through it. Inside, it's as if time had stood still." She blinked, looked at him, a hint of real humor in her eyes now. "You'd find a lot to plunder: gold, jewels..."

"What about the key?"

"It was lying on the altar, just like someone meant to come back for it." That haunted look came back into her eyes. "Maybe something did." With an effort she threw it off. "Allan, I think those stories are true. I think they were dabbling in the occult. More than dabbling. They...disturbed something, something that consumed them. A...a maelstrom of evil."

"I don't understand."

"You'll think this next bit's mad."

He didn't doubt that at all. He reached across the table to grasp her hands. "Tell me."

"Alhazred used the key. He opened the door."

"What door?"

"The doorway, to the other side."

"Are you talking about a physical door or--"

"No. Alhazred fitted the key onto the altar, and...Everything went peculiar." She looked at him helplessly, desperate to convey information, but not able to find the words. "We weren't on Paanmaatsaan anymore. We crossed to some other...some other..." She jerked her hands free of his grip. "They all died--Tommy, Kara, everyone. And I stood there with Alhazred and just watched as this...this force consumed them."

"Pamela--"

"I don't remember much more. Just that, somehow, we were back on our ship--just me and Alhazred--and then he dumped me on the first inhabited world he came across. And that's all I know, Allan." She looked into his eyes then, searching; finding pity, sadness, disbelief. "You think I'm mad." She sounded resigned, and too worn out to care.

"I think...I think you've had a bad experience, and you need rest and care."

"Allan, please, find Alhazred, get the key back from him before he goes back there and unleashes that evil. You have to stop him. Promise me."

"Pamela, you're not well--"

"Don't worry about me. I don't matter. Find Alhazred, stop him."

What could he do? How could he reason with her in that state of mind? "All right. I'll do what I can. But where do I look?"

"He told me once that he came from Destran."

"All right. I'll start there. I will find him for you."

Her relief was almost palpable. "Thank you. I knew you wouldn't let me down this time."

"...I persuaded her to let me take her to a hospital," Travis was telling Rafferty on the Recovery. "I checked her in, told the doctors an edited version of her story. They told me they'd take good care of her, and she ought to make a full recovery."

"Well," Rafferty said after awhile, "this Alhazred's real enough."

"Yes."

Rafferty studied the man opposite him. "What about the rest of it? Do you believe any of it?"

"I don't know, Danny. It sounds..." He shook his head. "I'll know more after I've talked with Alhazred." He stood up then, reaching for his blaster holster, strapping it on. "Come on."

There was a look in Travis' eyes that made Rafferty glad he was not Alhazred.

The TARDIS materialized in a park not too far from the bazaar. The Police Box and the three people who came out of it drew only a few curious looks. Not having to explain who they were, or what they were doing there ought to make a pleasant change all by itself, the Doctor thought.

There was a bandstand set up, nearby, and a large group of people clustered around it, picnicking and enjoying the music. It was a peaceful, soothing atmosphere, and the Doctor had a hunch this would be just the thing to boost everyone's spirits. Tegan especially needed a breather; he suspected she was still troubled by having been possessed by the Mara, and he could hardly blame her. Turlough seemed to have something troubling on his mind, too, but until the young man decided to talk about it, there wasn't very much the Time Lord could do for him.

They gradually made their way to the bazaar, which proved to be an energetic contrast to the park. Colorful tents were set up, stalls displayed a large variety of merchandise. The merchants stood at their posts, exhorting passersby to stop and examine the diverse wares, all in the best humored manner. The trio from the TARDIS stopped to watch a demonstration of a holograph projector, enjoying the little play put on by three-dimensional images of beings from around the galaxy. The merchant didn't make any sales, but he didn't seem to mind.

"Are they always this good natured?" Tegan said.

"It's a holiday world," the Doctor told her. "Their tourist trade wouldn't fare very well if they were rude and ill-tempered." He was looking at a display case full of rather gaudy jewelry; there was a pendant that reminded him a little of the crystal he'd found on Metebilis III.

"What's that?" Turlough asked, pointing to one of the tents, one covered with strange symbols.

The Doctor looked at it. "The Necromancer."

"A witch?" Tegan asked.

"Warlock actually. More of an astrologer and magician really." The Doctor smiled. "Would you care to have your fortune told?"

"The way things have been going, it might not be a bad idea."

"Can he really do it?" Turlough said. "Tell your future?"

The Doctor stuffed his hands in his pockets, frowning thoughtfully. "I've never put much stock in it myself, but I've known people who did believe in such things."

They walked over to the Necromancer's tent, and the Doctor pulled the flap aside. The interior was suitably dark, the only illumination coming from candles lit at each point of a pentacle drawn on the floor, with a table in the center upon which sat a many-faceted crystal ball, which cast a soft, purple light all around in a sort of aureole.

"Doesn't seem to be anyone about--" the Doctor began, but another voice came out of the shadows:

"Enter at your risk," the soft, low voice said.

Exchanging amused looks with his companions, the Doctor gestured them on inside. The man who greeted them was tall, a little haggard-looking, with blue eyes and close-cropped dark hair. He wore a dark, cowed cloak, and a medallion with intricate carvings was around his neck.

The Necromancer indicated that they be seated around the table where the faceted crystal glowed (the Doctor thought it seemed to be softly humming as well; odd sort of crystal ball). The crystal bathed their faces in an eerie light, and the Doctor felt himself compelled to look into one of the facets.

"Look deep into the crystal," the Necromancer intoned. "See your lives revealed."

The Time Lord looked deep, and saw images from his past lives played out there. He watched as friends and enemies came and went, saw one incarnation pass into another--he was jolted back to reality by Tegan's screams. He jumped up, leaning over her as she sat back, breathing a little too rapidly. He noted idly that the facet she must have been looking into was cloudy now.

"Tegan, what is it? Are you all right?"

"The Mara," she whispered. "I saw it in there...felt it taking me over again."

The Doctor patted her shoulders reassuringly, saying, "The Mara's gone, completely. It was just your memory of it." The crystal exerted some sort of hypnotic influence, he thought; he should have suspected something like this.

"I regret the distress this has caused," the Necromancer said.

"Do you?" The Doctor was pleased to see Tegan sit up, look around more calmly. "All right now?" he asked, his smile encouraging.

She nodded. "Can we get out of here?"



"Please," the Necromancer said, picking up a pack of Tarot cards, "allow me to read your fortune at least, make amends for--"

"No, thank you," the Doctor said, helping Tegan to her feet. "Where's Turlough?"

"The boy who was with you?"

"Yes."

"He ran out of here just before your companion became distraught." The Necromancer seemed genuinely distressed by what had happened. Probably his other visitors had much more mundane experiences to be drawn out by the crystal, but the Doctor wasn't in a mood to be very generous right now.

He and Tegan left the tent, looking for Turlough, but they couldn't spot him anywhere in the crowd.

"Maybe he went back to the TARDIS," Tegan said.

"Perhaps." The Doctor scanned the crowd one more time. "I wonder what he saw in the crystal?" It didn't seem like the boy could have had much in the way of traumatic experiences...unless it had something to do with how he'd wound up stranded on Earth.

"Maybe he saw his future," Tegan suggested.

The Doctor looked at her. "He did seem anxious about something." He shook his head, looking a bit rueful. "This isn't quite what I had in mind as a holiday." He took her arm. "Come on. We'll go back to the TARDIS, see if he's there."

He wasn't. He was only a few yards from the Necromancer's tent, watching the Doctor and Tegan head off through the crowd.

What Turlough had seen in the crystal was himself killing the Doctor. He didn't know how accurately the crystal foretold the future, nor did he care. All he knew was that he wasn't going to go through with it. He had to separate himself from the Doctor. Perhaps the Black Guardian could be convinced that the parting had been accidental, or even that the Doctor had kicked him off the TARDIS. Anything. Just so long as the Black Guardian released him and sought another agent. Turlough would have liked to warn the Doctor, but he just couldn't risk it.

It was starting to get dark now. He would have to find some place to spend the night, somewhere the Doctor and Tegan wouldn't find him. He wasn't quite sure how he was going to get back to Trion now, or even if that was what he really ought to be considering; so far as he knew, the political situation that had sent his family into exile hadn't changed. But he'd worry about that later; something would turn up, one way or another.

This time with no strings attached.

* * * * *

The Necromancer murmured an incantation, gazing into the faceted crystal. He had been badly shaken by the unpleasant experiences of his last three customers; it was extremely rare of the crystal to present memories or future projection that were distasteful to the client.

His incantation resulted in the scenes the three people had watched being played back to him. He saw the young woman taken over by a monstrous snake...the blond man had seen himself and four other men with a variety of people and creatures...and the boy had watched himself shot down his companion. The Necromancer ended the playback, feeling a sudden chill. No wonder he had been upset. Should the blond man be warned to be wary of his friend? The crystal didn't project a definite future, not always.

The Necromancer fingered the medallion nervously, uncertain of how to proceed. And unaware that the flap to the tent had been drawn back...

* * * * *

Turlough had decided to go back and see the Necromancer, perhaps find out if the crystal could foresee a solution to his problem. As he went up to the tent everything seemed as it had before, quieter now that the bazaar was emptied of tourists, but as he was about to go in an arm went around him from behind and he felt the muzzle of a gun against his ribs.

"What are you doing here?" came a woman's voice in his ear.

"Nothing. I was just going to have my fortune told," Turlough answered, truthfully, but without much hope of being believed.

An assumption which proved correct, as the woman pushed him into the tent. "Get over there with the wizard," she told him, gesturing with her blaster. She wasn't very big, but her darkly pretty looks were belied by a certain fierceness that made Turlough do as he was told.

He moved to the Necromancer's side, noting that the man was disheveled, with blood trickling from a corner of his mouth. There were four other people in the tent, three men and another woman, all a little rough-looking. He had a feeling that if the Necromancer were to read either of their fortunes just now, their futures might look a trifle bleak.

"Let the boy go," said the Necromancer. "He doesn't have anything to do with this."

One of the men, tall, coolly dangerous, spoke up, "Give us the map, Alhazred, and the key, and I'll let you both go."

"I don't have the things you speak of."

The other man backhanded him across the face. "Don't overestimate your value to me. We can kill you and take what we want just as easily." He looked at the other two men who had systematically ransacking the tent. "Any luck?"

One of them, medium sized and nondescript, shook his head. "If he's got the stuff stashed here, Travis, I don't know where."

Travis turned back to the Necromancer, eyes narrowing as he looked at the medallion around Alhazred's neck. "What is that?"

The Necromancer raised his hands to clutch at the medallion, but the one called Travis grabbed it by the chain, pulled and broke the links, jerking it from the wizard's neck.

"No! You mustn't take that!" The Necromancer grabbed at the medallion, but Travis shoved him back against the table, causing the crystal to fall to the ground and roll. "You're tampering with things you don't understand," Alhazred declared, dragging himself to his knees.

"Well then, we'll bring you along to explain," Travis said, reaching to haul the man to his feet.

"No!" The wizard pulled free, shoving Travis aside and running for the exit. The woman who had caught Turlough tried to catch the Necromancer, but he threw her aside too, plunging out into the dark, almost deserted bazaar.

"Well get after him!" Travis bellowed, keeping a hold on Turlough as the others charged after the Necromancer. They were back before long though, empty-handed. "He got away," said the nondescript one, to the evident displeasure of the leader.

"Damn. I had more questions for him." Travis held the medallion up, examining it. "This may be all we'll need."

Turlough had been wondering how he might turn all this to his advantage. This bunch wasn't exactly his first choice for travelling companions, but better than nothing at all. "Maybe I could answer your questions," he said.

Travis looked at him, skeptically. "How?"

"I'm his apprentice."

"Are you?" Travis dangled the medallion before Turlough. "Do you know how to work this?"

If he said no, Turlough thought, they might just let him go. But if he said yes, and they later found out he'd lied, they might kill him...Now that he looked at the medallion, at the way some jewels were inlaid in a specific pattern, he did have an idea. "Yes," he said, "it's a starmap."

"Smart boy," said Travis. "But can you turn it into a key?"

A key? "Of course," Turlough lied, and hoped he'd be able to think of something when the time came.

* * * * *

"I don't understand why he'd run off like this," the Doctor was saying, pacing back and forth in the TARDIS control room, hands jammed in pockets. "It just doesn't make sense."

"Won't he just come back whenever he feels like it?" Tegan said.

"He could be in trouble."

"He could've decided to jump ship."

The Doctor frowned. "He may have seen something very upsetting in that crystal; I would think you'd be a bit more sympathetic."

"He makes it difficult."

"It takes awhile to get used to some people," the Doctor said, pointedly.

Tegan glared at him, folding her arms. "I don't notice you kicking me off the TARDIS."

The Doctor smiled. "Because I've gotten used to you." He reached for the door release lever. "I'm going to have another look round for him; you stay here."

"Some holiday this is turning out to be," she sniffed.

The Doctor sighed. "I'll be back as soon as possible. If you like, go and listen to the concert. Just don't wander off; I don't want to have to go looking for you, too."

The look Tegan gave him made his exit a bit more hasty, but he was smiling. He was relieved that she seemed to be recovering her spirit. Now, if he could just find Turlough, they just might be able to enjoy themselves.

He was nearing the bazaar when a dark robed figure barreled into him. The Necromancer clutched at him, tried to regain his balance, staring into the Doctor's face. "The boy who was with you," he gasped. "He's in great danger!"

"What are you talking about? Have you seen him?" The Doctor steadied the Necromancer, trying to control his own alarm.

The wizard told him of the spacers that had come to his tent, demanding that he help them find a particular planet. "They believe there is some great treasure to be found there. They have no idea of the powers they will be tampering with."

"Yes, yes. But what's this got to do with Turlough?"

"He returned to my tent for some reason, and they assumed he had some association with me. They may harm him."

The Doctor didn't think it wise to delay any longer, and ran off for the wizard's tent, the Necromancer following. When they got to the tent they found it ransacked and deserted, the crystal still on the floor.

"Where would they have gone?" the Doctor asked, looking around for some clue.

"To the spaceport. Travis wouldn't want to waste any time--" The Necromancer caught himself, as though he'd said too much.

"Travis?"

The Necromancer shook his head. "Nothing." He righted the table and put the crystal back in place. "Before you go after the boy, there is something you should see."

The Doctor was anxious to be off, but he came over to the table, standing by the Necromancer as he murmured an incantation and one of the facets of the crystal flickered with images. Curious, the Doctor leaned forward a little, watching the tableau that unfolded:

The Doctor and Turlough were moving through some eerie ruins, the sand piled high and stirred by a breeze. They separated, and it began to look as if Turlough was circling around, trying to sneak up on the Time Lord. Then, suddenly, the Doctor turned and Turlough was behind him, aiming a gun at him. An energy beam burst from the muzzle, striking the Doctor in the chest. The Time Lord crumpled and fell, and the scene faded.

"That was what he saw?" the Doctor asked, rubbing his chest.

"Yes."

"I see." Why on earth should Turlough want to kill him? "This device," he tapped the crystal. "It's not a crystal ball."

"No. It's a computer, of sorts. I found it--" Once again the wizard let his words go unspoken. "It taps the subconscious mind and projects what has happened to a person, or what might befall them. I thought you should know what is on his mind."

"Because I might not want to find him then?" The Doctor shook his head, going to the exit. "That only makes finding him more imperative." He couldn't leave something like this unresolved. "Will you do me a favor?"

"If I can."

"Please find the young woman I was with and tell her what's happened. Her name's Tegan, and she'll be at the TARDIS." He smiled, added, "I'm the Doctor, and the TARDIS is a tall, blue box with a lamp on top. It's in the park, you won't miss it."

The Necromancer nodded. "And what will you do?"

"Find Turlough," the Doctor said, and left.

* * * * *

Tegan was sitting on a bench in the park, listening to the music and keeping an eye on the TARDIS. The curiously arranged notes produced by the musicians didn't sound quite right to her ears, but there was something compelling about the melodies. Her brief respite from the excitement that went with travelling in the time craft was broken when the Necromancer came rushing up. He stopped, peering about in the lamplight, then slowly approached the Police Box, shaking his head in disbelief as he circled it, reached out to touch it.

"Looking for something?" Tegan said.

He started, turned. "Is this the TARDIS?"

Tegan nodded.

The Necromancer scratched his chin, shook his head again. "Live long enough and you'll see everything," he murmured. "I have a message from the Doctor," he said to Tegan, and told her what had happened.

"And I'm supposed to wait here?" Tegan didn't think much of that idea. "Where is this spaceport?"

* * * * *

The Doctor wasn't having any luck locating Turlough. He had learned that several ships had taken off in the past hour, and one nicely grogged spacer had said he'd seen a young man matching Turlough's description board one of the ships. Ordinarily the Doctor would have been skeptical of such an eyewitness, but considering what the Necromancer had said, the people who had taken Turlough were very likely in a hurry. He'd do much better to get back to that mystical gentleman and find out the name and location of the world eliciting so much interest.

He was halfway back to the park when he met Tegan.

"No luck?"

He shook his head. "I think they're long gone. Where's the Necromancer?"

"Back at his tent."

"Come on." The Doctor set off for the bazaar at a rapid pace. Something told him the Necromancer might have a sudden urge to move onto greener pastures. He was right, for when they got to the tent, they found the wizard throwing his belongings into a trunk. Nor did he seem terribly pleased to see them again.

"Is business that bad?" said the Doctor, standing just inside the tent.

"It is time I moved on," the Necromancer said, looking around at the dark corners of the tent, as if suspecting something lurked there, ready to snatch him. "I cannot stay here."

The Doctor came further into the tent. "Why? What are you afraid of?" He remembered the man babbling about tampering with unknown dangers. Mystic nonsense, or was there a grain of truth somewhere? "You know where they're going. Tell me."

The Necromancer licked his lips, eyes darting about. "And you would go there?"

"To find Turlough, yes."

The wizard shook his head. "It is too dangerous."

"I'll risk it. Tell me the name of the planet."

The Necromancer looked at him, saw the determination in his eyes. "You would need my guidance," he said at last, with reluctance.

"Then come with us."

The Necromancer sighed, looked resigned to his fate. "Very well. I will need help with my equipment," he gestured to the trunk.

The Doctor nodded, went over and closed the lid. "I'll help you carry it."

The Necromancer seemed to take the TARDIS pretty much in stride, and was quite happy to settle in the room the Doctor found for him. He had dug a tattered map from his trunk and given it to the Doctor, saying that it was a starchart that would provide the location of the world he sought.

"Thank you," the Doctor said, studying the chart. "I don't think I recognize this constellation."

"Few living would," said the Necromancer, his tone a little ominous.

"I see." The Doctor rolled the map up again, studying his guest. "Do you have a name?"

The wizard met his gaze. "Some have called me Alhazred."

"Have they?" the Doctor murmured. "Please, make yourself at home. We'll be in the control room. Tegan, come along."

Back in the control room, Tegan watched as the Doctor studied the starchart again, then began programming the TARDIS with the coordinates. "Can we trust him?" she finally asked.

The Time Lord stepped back from the console, surveying the instruments. "Yes. He's our only key to finding Turlough." He looked at her with a sort of challenging expression.

"I didn't say anything."

"No, but you were thinking something."

"Look, I may not like the brat very much, but I don't want to see him get hurt."

"That's better." The Doctor looked over the instruments again, seemed satisfied with everything.

"When he told you his name," Tegan said, "you looked as if you recognized it."

The Doctor looked at her thoughtfully. "I think I did. Another time, another place." He shrugged. "It may be coincidence."

"If it isn't?"

"That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange eons even death may die," he said, his tone almost as ominous as the Necromancer's.

Tegan stared at him, not getting this at all. "What?"

He shook his head. "Let's wait and see."

* * * * *

To Turlough's surprise, he was not mistreated once he was aboard the Recovery. Instead, he was shown to a cabin--a bit cramped, and spartan, but comfortable enough--and not even locked inside. Well, there was a warning that if he knew what was good for him, he wouldn't go wandering round the ship, but that seemed a reasonable request, and Turlough had no intention of being a rude guest. He'd be in trouble enough when they learned he had no idea of how to work that medallion. He suspected that Travis, in particular, would not be amused. Whether they would be provoked into violence upon his person, or merely kicking him off the ship at the nearest port, he couldn't tell just yet. He would just have to keep his fingers crossed.

At least he was off the TARDIS, and his bargain with the Black Guardian forfeit. Lying back on his bunk, Turlough drew the cube from a pocket, and was relieved to find it still cracked and blackened. He would get rid of it at the earliest opportunity, and then he could really put this all behind him. Where he'd go from here was something he wasn't too certain of just yet...but something would turn up. It always did.

* * * * *

Rafferty had finally got around to telling the others what was behind this dash across the galaxy, and they were all on the flight-deck discussing it. Travis only half heard them; he found the medallion more interesting. Clever of Alhazred to make it just an accessory to his act. Unless you knew what you were looking for, you might never spot it. Fortunately Pamela had provided him with a drawing she'd made of it, and between that and his own reference library he had managed to turn up quite a tidy sum of information on the Paanmaat Empire. Some of it might even be useful. For instance, he had found several references to keys that had been used by the high priests, specially coded to seal their tombs and temples, and the descriptions were very similar to the medallion he held in his hands.

He ran his fingers over the facets, sparkling gems that marked out a particular constellation, then turned it over and studied the pattern of ridges and indentations. He wished Pamela had been a tad more specific about how exactly it worked, just what sort of door it unlocked. Well, Rafferty and Garin were always bragging that the door hadn't been invented which they couldn't open, and Travis thought it might even be true in Danny's case. Hopefully, this wouldn't be the lone exception.

Of course...Pamela had said it wasn't a physical doorway that was to be opened. He shook his head, not knowing what to make of that. There had to be some logical explanation for all the things she'd told him, some sensible answer. Travis was all for keeping an open mind, but he couldn't see himself succumbing to superstition at this late date. Perhaps Alhazred had meant to cheat her out of her discovery, given her some drug that had produced her...visions.

Except, if that were the case, then why had Alhazred been hanging around Destran, playing at the occult? No, there were still some pieces of the puzzle missing. Perhaps he'd find them on Paanmaatsaan.

At least Pamela was safe enough back on Restiri, and if she really had found this cosmic Atlantis he

would see she got the credit she deserved. He owed her that much. More, probably, but there was nothing he could ever do to make amends for betraying her trust.

Funny how it still bothered him. Until then he hadn't really given much thought to his little sideline business in artifacts. What did it matter if some small, inconsequential item wound up on public display in some dusty museum, or in the private collection of someone who really appreciated what they had? And who was prepared to subsidize a young archaeologist trying to make ends meet? But he had never forgotten the look in Pamela's eyes when she had realized what he'd done. He'd never seen such a hurt, angry look before...

"Jones to Travis, come in please."

He blinked, focused on Anna. "What?"

She handed him a computer print out. "That's all I can find out about Alhazred."

It wasn't much, he thought, reading through the material. "He's a long-time student of the occult. Interesting."

"You think that may connect with this Paanmaat thing?"

"Don't know. I suppose he could be interested in the legends." Travis scowled at the unhelpful printout. It angered him beyond words to think that six people had lost their lives, one woman driven half out of her mind, just because some loon was obsessed with things that went bump in the night. He was more angry with himself for letting the man get away.

"This Drury woman," Anna said, studying his face carefully. "Were you lovers?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Just curious," she said, in a sort of off-hand way that wasn't very convincing. "I mean, she must have been special to you to get dashing off like this."

He smiled, a little. "We were friends. If there had been more time, and had the circumstances been different, we might have been more."

Garin snorted. "And if you believe that, Anna, you'll believe anything."

Travis swiveled his chair to look at him. "Something on your mind?"

"What makes you think he has one?" This from Rafferty.

Garin spared him a glance, then looked back at Travis. "Yeah, there's something on my mind. Why are we doing this? What's in it for us?"

"Allan is repaying a debt," said Kimri. "Isn't that correct?" she said to Travis.

"It's close." Travis turned his attention back to the young thief. "Garin, if you're worried about this being a non-profit venture, you can put your mind at ease. Relics from the Paanmaat culture are so rare that anything we pick up will fetch a lot of money."

Rafferty was looking at him with some surprise. "You mean you'd do that? Take something from there?"

"I think I can determine what would be crucial to a study of the culture, and what wouldn't be missed." He shrugged. "I expect Pamela expects me to grab something."

"That's what you say now," said Garin, still peevish. "You know, I had a great little caper lined up for us. There's this collector on Matadari, and he would give his right arm for a collection of art that's on exhibit at a gallery there. Would have been a breeze for us, and we'd have had a very good split of profits. Instead, you've got us chasing after a planet that probably doesn't exist, just so you can impress an old girlfriend."

"Garin, two things. First, you don't decide what capers we go on; when this operation becomes a democracy I'll let you know. Secondly, if you don't like the way business is conducted, you're free to leave. One professional thief is a necessity," Travis looked at Rafferty, then back to Garin. "Two's a luxury. Understand?"

Garin still looked put out, but didn't seem to have anything else to say at the moment.

Travis didn't like cutting him down that way, but he got a little weary of the youngster forever challenging him.

"Nice to know I'm appreciated," Rafferty said, leaning back in his chair, smiling. "Trav? What're we going to do about the kid?"

"Turlough? I don't know." Travis hadn't had a chance to question the boy yet, find out if he was bluffing or if he really did know something about Alhazred's operations.

"I think we've made a mistake," said Kimri. "I think Alhazred spoke truthfully when he said he and the boy had nothing to do with each other."

"You could be right."

"What will you do with him, Allan?"

Travis smiled. "What do you think I'll do, Kimmie? He can get off at the next port of call if he wants."

"Good," she said, breaking a rare smile.

"What's our ETA?"

Kimri turned back to the flight console, checked the instruments. "We should reach the coordinates on that map," she indicated the medallion, "in fifty-one hours at our present speed."

"Think there'll be anything to find?" Anna said, leaning on his chair.

Travis shrugged. "Why not hang around for a couple of days and find out?"

* * * * *

**"That is not dead which can eternal lie
And with strange eons even death may die."**

Tegan stared at the couplet, from a story called "The Call of Cthulhu" that the Doctor had been reading. In the story, the lines were taken from a book called The Necronomicon, written by a "mad Arab" called...Abdul Alhazred. She sat down and was soon absorbed in the story which was concerned with an investigation into a bizarre religious cult worshipping fantastic elder gods--chief among them, Cthulhu. There was another line that caught her eye: **In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.**

What did it all mean?

"Any comments?"

She started, looking around at the Doctor. "It's very strange. But it's just a story."

"Is it?"

Tegan found that response singularly unhelpful. "It must be. All this nonsense about elder gods," she tried to put a disdainful note in her Aussie twang, but didn't quite bring it off. "This is how you recognized his name."

"Yes. It's an odd coincidence."

She looked at him carefully. "You don't think it is a coincidence, do you?"

He sighed, took his hands from his pockets. "It does rather strain my level of credulity." He came over to sit by her. "Are you familiar with these stories?"

"No. I've heard of them, but they're not really my taste."

"They're very elaborate, a whole mythos of places and beings. Sheer fantasy, but in the very best there's an underlying suggestion of reality. The basic premise is that long ago there were a race of powerful, god-like beings, led by their High Priest, Cthulhu. They were a classic example of absolute power corrupting absolutely, and were incredibly evil. Another aggregation of 'gods'--the Ancient Ones--waged war with them, and drove them out of this plane of existence, imprisoning them on worlds in other dimensions. But the Elder Gods still had followers who would try to find the gateways...portals...to these other dimensions, in order to free the beings they worshipped and unleash great evil throughout the cosmos." The Doctor paused, looked at Tegan. "Interesting?"

Tegan sorted through what he had said. There was a certain sense of plausibility, she supposed, but it was still pretty hard to swallow. "This Alhazred. Where does he fit into things?"

"In the stories he was the one who discovered the Elder Gods still existed, and could cross back to this plane at certain times if the portals were opened. He wrote about them--where they were, how to open the doorways, everything--in The Necronomicon."

"And you think our, guest, might be him?"

The Doctor sighed. "Frankly, Tegan, I don't know what to think. I've heard tales..." He shook his head. "Can we afford to assume there's absolutely no basis for the legend?"

"But they're just stories written by a man who--"

"Written by a man who claimed many of the things he wrote about came to him in dreams." He gave her a significant look. "You especially should remember what can come in your dreams."

Tegan shivered, remembering her possession by the Mara. If evil could become manifest as something like the Mara, then why couldn't there be things like this Cthulhu? She had seen too many things in her travels with the Doctor to automatically dismiss anything, no matter how outre it might seem. "So what do we do now?"

"We find Turlough. And watch Alhazred."

* * * * *

In his room, Alhazred had dug out the crystal and set it on the table. He turned it on, murmured the

coded incantation that tuned it to his brainwave pattern. What he wanted it to show him was what might happen when he got to Paanmaatsaan. Perhaps because that was where the crystal came from, it was especially adept at forecasting what could unfold there. He had often wondered if it had told the Paanmaat priest who had used it what was to befall his civilization. But the crystal wouldn't yield up information on that.

The crystal glowed with that eerie purple light and hummed softly, one of the facets going cloudy and then flickering with images. Alhazred saw the TARDIS appear, the Doctor and Tegan walking towards the ruins...it flickered, and then came back into focus to show a spaceship landing and Travis and his crew coming out of it...Flickered again and went cloudy, then clear. Alhazred urged it to yield more information, needing to know his own role in things, what happened when they entered the temple, but the crystal just sat there, glowing and humming to itself, almost seeming smug.

He cursed, turned it off. Why would it tell others so much, yet reveal information to him in such grudging a manner? There were times when he almost felt it was more than a machine. Advanced as the Paanmaats had been, perhaps it was.

He didn't care what the Doctor did. It was Travis he was worried about. The Drury woman had spoken of him often, and made it clear that while Travis was unscrupulous he was not stupid. Might he be smart enough to figure out how to work the key? With his own knowledge, and the crystal, Alhazred had no worries about being able to make the crossover; finding the key in the first place had only made the first attempt easier, it had not been essential. But to a novice like Travis it might make all the difference.

Alhazred was determined to see that that contingency did not arise. He would not be cheated of everything now, when it was all so close he could feel it. He would not.

* * * * *

"Not exactly a four star holiday resort," Tegan said, standing with the Doctor before the scanner screen, getting her first look at Paanmaatsaan. Lots of sand, rocks, and extensive ruins. "Doesn't look like there'd be that much to plunder."

The Doctor smiled. "We only have Alhazred's word that anyone intends to do any plundering."

"But if Turlough was kidnapped--"

"We don't know that he was."

"You think he might have gone with this Travis and his gang on his own?"

The Doctor shrugged. "He's been preoccupied lately. Who knows what might be going on in his mind." He couldn't get that image out of his mind, of Turlough shooting him. He suspected Turlough couldn't either, and that was very likely why--as Tegan put it--jumped ship. The boy was a puzzle of contradictions at the best of times; cool and aloof most of the time, yet with an occasional spark of concern for others, always a little uncomfortable to be around. The Doctor didn't like to admit it, but he didn't entirely trust Turlough. At the same time, he did like the young man. Something kept telling him that there was someone worth knowing behind that enigmatic facade, and he wasn't going to abandon him.

But what if Turlough wanted to leave the TARDIS--either because he genuinely did not want to be there, or because he was concerned about that prediction? Well, the Time Lord decided all he could do was cross that bridge when he reached it.

"Will you tell our guest we've arrived?" he said to Tegan.

"And watch him like a hawk?"

The Doctor grinned. "Something like that."

Alhazred seemed edgy, jumpy as they left the TARDIS and began moving towards the ruined city. Once again he behaved as though, at any moment, he expected something to come out of the shadows and snatch him away. At the same time, there was an air of restrained excitement about him, as though any second he might go romping through the ruins.

He's been here before, the Doctor thought, and wondered what the circumstances of the previous visit had been.

"I don't see any spaceship," Tegan said, looking around at the endless stretch of desert.

"Either we've arrived first," said the Doctor, "or this isn't where they're coming." He cast an inquisitive look at Alhazred.

"This is where Travis is coming," that gentleman said, sounding certain of his knowledge. "They'll be here." He didn't sound particularly happy about it.

"You seem to know an awful lot about this Travis person," Tegan said as they walked along.

Alhazred laughed. "I know chapter and verse on Dr. Allan Michael Travis." He looked at her. "You women, you're a funny lot, aren't you?"

"Are we?"

"You can hate a man's guts and still be obsessed with them. Morning, noon, and night all I heard was Travis this, Travis that, until I was sick of hearing of him." He caught himself, as though suddenly realizing he may have been saying too much.

As far as the Doctor was concerned Alhazred hadn't said nearly enough. "This Travis, what's he a doctor of?"

Alhazred gave him a wary look. "He was an archaeologist."

"Was?"

"He funded his expeditions through the sale of artifacts. He's nothing but a thief now."

"And that's why he's coming here?" Tegan said, still wondering what anyone could find to steal around here, but then she wasn't a specialist in archaeological relics. "Where is this, anyway?"

Alhazred gave them another cautious look. "This is Paanmaatsaan."

He said it as though expecting to impress them, the Doctor thought, but the name meant nothing to him. Well, even after eight hundred years of living he couldn't know everything. He wished he did know something about this world though, as that could help him determine what Alhazred was up to--and whether or not it had anything to do with those stories.

They had reached the outskirts of the city now, and the Doctor had to admit there was something compelling about it all. Whoever had lived on this world, they had believed in doing things on a grand scale. Even tumbled down and half buried in the sand, there was a certain aura of majesty.

There could be something here for this Dr. Travis to steal, but what was the Necromancer after?

* * * * *

The Recovery kicked up a cloud of dust as it came down for a smooth landing on the surface of Paanmaatsaan. The boarding ramp extended, and the entry hatched hissed open. Travis and Rafferty stood there, looking out at the expanse of sand, and the ruins on the horizon. Silent, still, just a hot breeze gently stirring the sand.

"Bleak, isn't it?" said Rafferty.

Travis looked at him, sighed. Too much to expect, he supposed, that any of his companions would share his feeling of keyed up wonder. He probably had no business feeling that way, come to that, but a person could only be so cynical. There was still something in him that got a little thrill out of setting foot on an unexplored world. And...this was Paanmaatsaan.

"I've seen worse, Danny," he told the thief.

Rafferty gave him a thoughtful look. "You miss it, don't you? Poking around on obscure, desolate worlds?"

Travis smiled. "Sometimes."

"And no regrets that you blew it?"

"Did anyone ever tell you that you ask an awful lot of questions?"

Rafferty shrugged, gave him that disarming smile. "If you don't ask questions you never find out anything."

Travis laughed, softly. Ever since they'd met, Danny'd seemed to regard him as some sort of puzzle to be solved. For some reason Travis found he didn't really mind. "I made my choice, Danny, and there's not much point in playing what-if about it."

"Yeah. You just get stuck in the past doing that, don't you? And there's no future in it." He went down the ramp with Travis, adjusting his satchel, bouncing on his toes. "Allan?"

"Hmmm?" Travis was looking back up the ramp, wishing the others would hurry it up. He looked back at Rafferty. "Something else you're curious about?"

"Uh-huh." The thief pointed to the ruins. "What if your girlfriend's right and there are...things over there?"

"It's not likely."

"But is anything ever completely impossible?"

Travis had actually given that quite a bit of thought on the trip out, but he hadn't arrived at any sort of real answer. Part of him automatically rejected the idea, regarding it as a lot of superstitious nonsense. On the other hand...it was never wise to make assumptions, especially given a lack of any real evidence one

way or the other. And hadn't someone once said that any sufficiently advanced technology was indistinguishable from magic? Given what was known about the Paanmaats, who knew what they may have got up to before the end?

"There are always inexplicable possibilities," he finally said, which was probably a feeble answer. Then he smiled. "But what's life without a few risks?"

Rafferty made a face. "Long-lived, for one thing."

Travis' smile stretched to a grin.

He glanced around as he heard the others approaching, with Turlough in tow. "Everyone got their gear?" They nodded, and he turned his attention to Turlough, seeing the way he was looking around at their surroundings. "You don't have the vaguest idea what this is all about, do you?"

"Of course I--"

"Don't lie."

Turlough looked at him, his expression wary but also relieved. "No, I don't know anything about this place."

"Why did you say that you did?"

"I thought you'd kill me otherwise."

"You'd be surprised how few people we kill," Travis told him, smiling. "Why were you so anxious to get off Destran?"

"Does it matter?"

"Perhaps not." Travis glanced over at Garin. "And you won't be the first person who's hitched a ride with us."

Garin bristled again. "How many times do I have to explain about that? Those furry fanatics were out for my blood, and your ship was the only way out of there."

"If you had come in with us to start with we could have appropriated that statue, and saved everyone a great deal of trouble."

"Yeah, well I didn't know what you were up to now, did I? For all I knew, you could've been special agents after me."

Rafferty shook his head. "Sad what paranoia does to a person, isn't it? And so young, too."

Predictably Garin responded to that, and Travis let them carry on as they made their way into the city. It was as good a way as any to ease the tension.

* * * * *

Turlough fell into step behind Kimri and Anna, feeling a little more at ease with the women. Travis might have a nice smile and all, but he remembered the way the man had looked at the Necromancer; Turlough would not have been surprised if Travis had killed that wizard. All things considered, Turlough thought it was probably a good idea for him to keep a low profile.

Things were beginning to look up, however. He wasn't sure just what brought these people to this desolate hole--to steal something, judging by their conversation--but it could all work to his advantage. Assuming all went well, Travis and his crew would want to dispose of their loot, and would probably choose to do so on some well-populated, high-tech world. That was what Turlough needed, somewhere he could take the leisure to work out his future. And while he was thinking of it...

He took the crystal from his pocket, relieved to see it was still without that glow that meant the Black Guardian was with him. Good. He threw it away, watching with satisfaction as it tumbled down a dune to be buried under the shifting sand.

Anna looked at him. "What was that?"

"An unwanted memento." Now he really was free, the contract forfeit. The Black Guardian couldn't get to him, and the Doctor would never find him. That's when he saw the TARDIS.



* * * * *

"Trav?" Rafferty was staring at the Police Box. "What is it?"

Travis wished he had an answer for him. It certainly was not a product of the Paanmaat culture.

"It looks like some sort of commbooth," said Anna. "But what's it doing here?"

Travis moved closer, reading the plaque. He opened the door where the telephone was located, even picked up the receiver and examined it. It didn't work, of course. He recognized the device, but could conceive of no reason for its being on this particular world. He tried the door, but it was locked. Stepping back, he frowned, rubbed his chin. "You're right, Anna. It is a precursor of our commbooths, but less sophisticated. Apparently this one was of primary use to law enforcement authorities on Earth."

"Law enforcement?" Rafferty couldn't help casting an apprehensive look around him.

Travis pointed out the lettering above the door.

"Oh. I hadn't noticed. You don't suppose--"

"No, I don't. This is a product of twentieth century Earth."

"So again," said Anna. "What's it doing here?"

Travis shrugged. "You tell me and we'll all know." He glanced at Turlough, saw the boy was not sharing their bafflement. Instead, Turlough looked as if he knew what this object was, and wasn't at all happy to see it. Something to do, perhaps, with why he had been so eager to get away from Destran?

"If you know anything about this," Travis told him, "it would be a very good idea for you to enlighten us." His voice was soft, but there was a hint of menace there. A few calculated risks were one thing, and they were all accustomed to that, but he would not tolerate anyone deliberately endangering them.

Turlough stared at him, anxious and uneasy again. "Look, it's nothing to do with you."

"Convince me." Frankly, Travis didn't see how this Police Box could pose them any threat, but its presence here clearly disturbed Turlough. "Look, if you're in some sort of trouble with the law, we're not likely to turn you over to whoever's after you."

Turlough gave him a slightly despairing look. "I think you might; the Doctor can be very persuasive."

"Doctor?"

"He's a Time Lord." The desperation gave way to a sort of restrained, resigned humor. "From Gallifrey."

Rafferty looked at Travis. "So what's a Time Lord? And where's Gallifrey?"

He threw the smaller man an irritated look. "Do I look like I know?" His eyes narrowed a little as he looked from Turlough to the Police Box. "And I suppose next you're going to tell me that's a time machine?"

"I wasn't, actually. Would you believe me if I did?"

"No."

Turlough shrugged.

"Look, who gives a damn?" said Garin, impatient and querulous again. "If he gives us a problem, we blast him. Now, you said there'd be something here to interest us. All I see are sand and rocks."

"It pains me to admit it," said Rafferty, "but he's got a point."

"I know." Travis gestured for Turlough to move on with the others. He hated leaving a puzzle unsolved, but perhaps more information would be forthcoming shortly. One way or another.

It was just as Pamela had described it to him, Travis thought as they made their way into the city. Massive and forlorn, hinting at an alien but elegant grandeur. The others had to practically drag him away from the mural, he found it so fascinating. He'd seen representations of the Paanmaats before, of course, in paintings and sculpture from other worlds, but it was a little different to see them portrayed as they had viewed themselves. He wondered who the amphibious types were, though. Servants of some sort he imagined, but there was something a little unsettling about them, although it was nothing he could put a finger on.

"Maybe you just don't like frogs," Rafferty said when Travis expressed his misgivings. "With me it's anything crawly--snakes, bugs, you name it." One of the little lizards darted across his path just then. "Not too keen on them either," he added, making a comical face.

"I don't like large bodies of water," Garin volunteered.

"Why not?"

"I can't swim."

"Oh. I expect that's a good reason then."

Travis smiled. "Yes, well I don't have a phobia about amphibians. I just don't like the looks of those attendants."

"I admit I might not frequent a restaurant that had one as the maitre d' but--"

"I wouldn't frequent a restaurant that'd have you as a customer," said Garin.

Travis sighed, put a hand on each one's shoulder. "We haven't got time for that now. There's the temple," he gestured to the one building that hadn't succumbed to time and elements. "Let's get to work."

Pamela's visit here had been fairly recent, but it probably wouldn't take much more than one good storm for the sand to pile up again, and the entrance would take some digging out. Of course Travis had made sure they came prepared for that contingency.

"Turlough, I want you to give Danny and Garin a hand digging out the entrance," he said. "Anna, you supervise."

"All right."

But Rafferty didn't think much of this portioning out of work. "I thought this outfit was one for all and all for one."

"What are you getting at?"

"Well, why can't I supervise and Anna dig?"

"Because your idea of supervision would be to find a nice cool spot and go to sleep."

Rafferty looked put out. "That's an unkind slander of my character."

A smile tugged at Travis' mouth. "Now, how can it be slander if it's true?"

The thief looked at him closely, saw he'd get nowhere, sighed. "C'mon, Gary, our lord and master commands we dig." He hefted one of the collapsible shovels they'd brought along.

Garin cast Travis an annoyed look, then followed Rafferty, saying, "Quit calling me Gary."

Turlough went with even more reluctance, although he seemed eager to get away from Travis.

"And what will you be doing while I watch the children?" Anna said.

"I think Kim and I'll have a look around. Just in case our red-headed friend may have left out a detail or two. Will you be all right?"

Her look implied that was an absurd question.

"Right. Come on, Kimmie."

They walked along in companionable silence for awhile, alert for anything. A piece of stone would be dislodged, cracking and banging against other stones--but it would just be one of the lizards scurrying along. A scraggly bush would rustle, but it was just the breeze. After awhile they paused for a rest, and Travis was mildly disgruntled that he was the only one who needed one. Kimri looked as cool and crisp as ever, but then her homeworld was mostly desert and savannah, so this was probably like being out for a walk back home. He, on the other hand, was panting and sweaty, feeling the dry heat keenly. He wiped a trickle of perspiration off his cheek, raising the canteen to his lips and savoring the cool water.

"I've been on enough worlds like this," he said. "You'd think I'd get used to it eventually."

Kimri smiled, reaching over to brush damp curls from his forehead. "I think you spend too much time carousing with Daniel."

"I think you're right."

"What are your plans when we leave here?"

"Assuming we find anything worth taking--"

"Garin will insist that we do."

"Yes. Well, we'll have to dispose of it. I have a couple of people in mind..."

"What about that collector on Karrix?"

"Uh-uh. Danny and I have outstanding warrants for our arrest there."

"That could apply to a number of places."

"I know. I'm going to take it up with the guild, see if they can get a few charges taken care of."

She started to reply, then tensed, scanning their surroundings. "Did you hear that?"

"No. What?" He stood up, hand hovering near his blaster.

She shook her head slightly. "I'm not sure...it may have been nothing." She made a wry face. "It's gone now. It was probably just one of these kanzats," she said, using her people's word for lizard.

"Probably." And then again...Travis had learned a long time ago that if Kimri thought she'd heard something, she usually had. All of her people seemed to have a sixth, or even seventh sense, warning them of direct personal danger (from an organic source; it was of no help in not falling over a cliff, for instance), and all their other senses were as highly developed. In some of the men, Garin for instance, it could seem like cultivated paranoia; with the women it was more a protectiveness, like a tigress guarding her brood.

"Which way?"

Kimri frowned, looking around, then strode off, Travis following without a moment's hesitation.

"...walking around in circles," a woman was saying somewhere up ahead.

Travis glanced at Kimri. Carefully, the two of them crept forward, huddling behind the remains of a wall, parting the weeds to peer through a crack, down into what would have been a courtyard once upon a time. There were three people down there, and one of them was Alhazred.

"Who do you think the others are?" Kimri whispered.

He shook his head. "Want to bet Turlough knows?"

"No bet."

Travis pulled a communicator from a pocket, clicked it on. "Travis to Jones, come in please."

"Jones here. Find something?"

"Yes. Our favorite wizard's here, and he's got company." He described the man and woman down in the courtyard. "Ask Turlough if that rings a bell."

"Hang on."

While he waited, Travis edged back to the wall, trying to catch what the trio below were talking about. The strangers seemed to be growing impatient with Alhazred, while the wizard was becoming querulous and agitated, throwing anxious looks around him at every sound. Just like Pamela...It was so unlikely, but might he have done her a disservice in thinking she was just stressed out? Could there really be some basis for those old legends?

"Travis?" It was Anna.

"Here. Was his memory jogged?"

"He says the strangers are someone called the Doctor, and Tegan, and that they're no danger to us."

"They may not be, but Alhazred's another matter entirely. But I think Kim and I can handle him."

"Sure?"

"Pretty sure. Travis out." He pocketed the communicator, looked at Kimri. "Ready?"

* * * * *

The Doctor was about at the end of his patience. They had been wandering around these ruins for what seemed like hours, with Alhazred scurrying from place to place, searching for something, and becoming increasingly agitated. The Doctor was almost willing to put the man's behavior down to sunstroke; Rassilon knew it was hot enough. Except, there did indeed seem to be a sort of method to the Necromancer's madness. He had darted into this magnificent shambles of a courtyard and begun scrabbling away at the sand, trying to unearth the tiles, and growing frustrated at his failure. Now he was insisting that they return to the TARDIS for his crystal computer.

"Why?" the Doctor said. "Will it help us find Turlough? Will any of this find us Turlough?"

"Do you think I care about the boy?" Alhazred was working himself into a fury. "It's the conjunctions! I must know the conjunctions!" He stabbed a finger at the ground. "This is the Astrologer Royals' house; they would be in the tiles. You won't keep me from it and neither will Travis!"

"You're dead sure of that, are you?" came a new voice.

The Doctor looked at the newcomers. One was a tall, lean young man, with dark curly hair, clad in khaki shirt and trousers and high boots; perspiring and a little breathless, but appearing to be in complete control of the situation. The mean-looking blaster in his hands helped with that. His companion was a tall, slender young woman, crisp and cool in a white jumpsuit, not a strand of hair out of place; she, too, was armed.

The young man looked at the Doctor and Tegan, then moved towards the Necromancer. "Fancy meeting you again so soon." And he smiled, rather in the manner a cat might, the Doctor thought, when it believes its vigil at the mousehole is about to pay off.

The way Alhazred was staring at him, the Doctor felt certain of the man's identity.

"Dr. Allan Michael Travis, I presume?"

Blue eyes flickered over him, didn't seem impressed. "Don't tell me, you do a mind-reading act."

"No. But do you know, I once knew this chap, Klegg, who did. Got me into no end of trouble, too, all over a crystal I had no business tak--"

"What makes you think I give a damn?" Travis turned his attention back to Alhazred, and the Doctor didn't need any sort of telepathy to discern the wizard was not one of Travis' favorite people.

Alhazred was slowly backing away, but he found his retreat blocked by the young woman. He tried to stare

her down, but she returned the look unfazed, not budging an inch. Alhazred cast a desperate look all about him, then made an effort to control his agitation. Succeeding, he threw a challenging look at Travis, then focused on the Doctor.

"This man and his cohorts are notorious criminals, wanted on dozens of worlds."

"Is that true?" the Doctor asked Travis.

A smile quirked Travis' mouth. "Possibly, but it's no concern of yours."

"I can't agree. I think one of your 'cohorts' is a friend of mine, a young man named Turlough?"

"Yes. He's with us. Unharmred."

The Doctor breathed a mental sigh of relief. He had been more worried about Turlough than he'd let on to Tegan. This Travis might look rather like the boy-next-door, but there was a certain ruthlessness there, too; and he and his companions probably were criminals of some sort, if not quite the desperate desperados Alhazred claimed. Fortunately, Turlough was rather good at looking after himself.

"Where is he?"

"Not far. At a temple we're trying to get into." Travis took a couple more steps towards Alhazred.

"Know anything about that?"

Alhazred evidently did know something, judging by the alarmed look that came into his eyes. "You are meddling in things you do not understand," he warned Travis again.

"I'm terrified," was Travis' mocking reply.

"You will be," said Alhazred, sounding very certain of that. Then he rushed at Tegan, holding her before him in the manner of a shield as he moved past Kimri--who hesitated just a moment before letting him pass. The wizard didn't appear to be armed, but he was the sort it paid to treat with caution. When he felt himself to be in the clear, Alhazred pushed Tegan roughly away--right into the Doctor's arms. And they were both nearly trampled as Travis charged after the Necromancer.

Not pausing as she hurried after him, Kimri said, "You'll find the temple one mile west of here."

Dusting herself off, Tegan said, "What is going on here?"

Gazing after the vanishing trio, the Time Lord just shook his head. "Let's go see if Turlough knows."

* * * * *

Travis had quickly lost Alhazred in the ruins, and was leaning back against a column, catching his breath. He had definitely been spending too much time running around with Danny; if he was going to continue in this line it might be a good idea to institute a fitness regimen for all of them. He dragged an arm across his forehead, his breath coming easier now, but he still felt soaked with sweat, his hair wilting. How the hell did Alhazred do it, he wondered as he drank from the canteen again, scurrying around here like a lunatic weasel, and all wrapped up in that heavy cloak? To top it off, the man was a good twenty-five years older than him. Well, maybe losing your mind did bring certain compensations, although it didn't strike Travis as being much worth it.

Where would the man go? To the temple? No, not knowing there were other people there. He would probably prefer to lie low for awhile, size up the situation. And as Alhazred had been here before he had the benefit of local knowledge, and could well be heading for a bolt-hole he'd prepared in advance.

Travis had just hauled out his communicator, intending to instruct the others to be on the lookout for the wizard, when a scraping-scuffling sound made him look round, and he caught a glimpse of a black-cloaked figure just disappearing around a wall. He set out in pursuit, darting under an arch, starting to slip around a massive block of masonry, when some instinct made him look up. Alhazred was crouched on the block, and even as Travis caught sight of him, the Necromancer launched himself from his perch, slamming into the archaeologist. Travis was smashed back against a section of wall, wrestling with the wizard. Rolling over and over in the sand, the Necromancer managed to straddle him, delivering a stunning blow to Travis' jaw.

Alhazred let the other man sprawl, dazed, in the sand, rummaging through his clothes. Finding the key, he sprang up, leaving Travis there, and went scampering off through the ruins.

* * * * *

Turlough and three other people--the rest of Travis' 'merry band', the Doctor presumed--were waiting for them as he and Tegan came into the temple area. The dark haired woman there eyed them with cool suspicion; the two men were obviously wary. Turlough just looked resigned, and not terribly pleased to see him and Tegan.

"Are you all right?" the Doctor asked him.

"I'm fine. You shouldn't have come after me."

"And you're very welcome, too," said Tegan. "We thought you might be in trouble with your new friends."

"As you can see, I'm not."

The Doctor thought that remained to be seen. The woman and the older of the two men seemed content to hang back, watching and waiting, but the younger man was radiating a dangerous impatience. Definitely a short fuse there.

The young man stepped forward a few paces, pale eyes narrowing, hand hovering near his gun. "What kind of set-up is this? Why are you with that wizard?"

The Doctor put on his best disarming smile, seeking to defuse the situation. In all fairness, he supposed that were he an intergalactic thief, with warrants out for his arrest, possibly even a sizable price on his head, then he, too, might be a trifle edgy should strangers suddenly come blundering along. It seemed like a nerve-racking profession all around, but there was no accounting for other peoples' choice of vocation.

"It's not a set-up," he said. "Cross my hearts." He grinned. "We're only here to collect Turlough,"--now that could be a poor choice of words under the circumstances, couldn't it--"That's if he wants to rejoin us, of course," the Doctor finished.

"Why should I believe that?"

Tricky, that. "Can you think of any reason that you shouldn't?" Ah, that made him pause.

The woman came forward, clamping a hand on the youth's shoulder and hauling him back. "Let's wait for Allan," she said. "We're too much in the dark here."

"And if he doesn't come back?"

"He will," said the other man. "Just be patient for once in our lives."

"Very sensible," the Doctor said, stuffing his hands in his pockets--then slowly withdrawing them as three guns were suddenly leveled at him. "Sorry," he said, holding his hands up and away from his body. "Just an old habit I'll try to break." He lowered his arms carefully, edged around to perch on a tumbled block of stone, indicating that Tegan should join him. "Perhaps we ought to introduce ourselves," he said, wondering how long this bunch would wait on their leader before taking action on their own. "I'm the Doctor, and this is Tegan." And what was taking Travis so long?

* * * * *

"...uhhhnn..." Travis cracked an eye open reluctantly, peering up at Kimri who was kneeling beside him, looking concerned.

Framing his face with her hands, she looked at him intently. "Do you know your name?"

"Uhhh?"

"Do you know your name?"

The cobwebs began to clear. "Of course I know my name."

"Well?"

"Travis, Allan Michael," he said, grumpy.

She looked pleased. "And who am I?"

"A mother hen," he continued to grump, trying to sit up--then deciding it wasn't so bad, lying there for a couple more minutes, appreciating life. "I'm okay, Kimmie." At her skeptical look he managed a feeble smile. "He went for my least vulnerable spot."

"Evidently." She sat back on her heels. "He's quite mad, isn't he?"

"Seems to be."

"Then hadn't we better do something?"

"I'm open to suggestions."

Kimri blessed him with a smile, then helped him to his feet, slipping an arm around his waist while he put one across her shoulders. "How do you feel, Allan?"

"Sore, achy, dizzy. I've known better days."

"Perhaps I should take you to the ship--"

"And perhaps you shouldn't." Travis had a hunch that this was not an optimum time for him to lay about the medical unit. Not with Alhazred on the loose, and this Doctor--whoever, whatever he was. Not to mention that Garin might be feeling a little trigger happy right about now. He favored Kimri with a crooked smile. "I've had worse days, too, Kimmie. With my shield or on it. Come on."

She got a better hold on him, moving off, saying, "I don't know what you'd do without me," only slightly tongue-in-cheek.

Neither did he.

* * * * *

Tegan leaned towards the Doctor. "How long do we sit here and stare at each other? We've got Turlough, why don't we just leave? We're not exactly being made welcome."

That was only too true, the Doctor reflected. Rafferty, Anna, and Garin were huddled together on a portion of the temple steps they had uncovered. They kept casting suspicious looks at him and Tegan--although they had relaxed just a bit after some message had come over a communicator. So at least their leader must be alive and well. The Doctor hoped that Travis would be forthcoming with some information, because he was much too curious about all of this to simply up and leave, as Tegan wanted.

Chances were this edgy trio wouldn't let them slip away, anyway; not to mention that the situation with Turlough remained unresolved.

The boy had determinedly kept to himself as they waited for Travis. Not over with Travis' people, but not coming to join him and Tegan either.

The Doctor was almost tempted to just let things be, or at least bide his time and wait for Turlough to bring up the subject. Of course it wouldn't be an easy matter to talk about. He could hardly expect Turlough to pop into the control room some morning, and say, 'Hullo, Doctor, I've got this subconscious urge to kill you.' It could even be that Turlough hadn't known of any such inclination, not until looking into that crystal. Might it help, the Doctor wondered, if he were to drop some hint that he knew what Turlough had seen there? Or would that only put the young man even more on the defensive, push him further away?

For the first time he realized how much he appreciated Tegan's blunt forthrightness. She might lack a certain tact now and then, but at least he always knew where he stood with her.

"Doctor, are you paying attention to a single word I'm saying?"

He focused on her, smiled. "No."

She gave him one of her looks, but didn't really have her heart in it. There was something a little subduing in the melancholy atmosphere of this planet, something that even got to her no-nonsense spirit. Something that even got to a gadfly Time Lord, a nebulous sort of eeriness.

It was beginning to get dark now, the pale rose of the sky deepening to a richer shade of crimson, a trio of moons glimmering at different phases in the sky. The wind that never quite ceased shivering the sands seemed a little stronger now, its whispering moan taking on a spectral quality as it darkened to twilight.

There was a scuffling sound, and everyone jumped--but it was only Travis and Kimri coming to join them at last. The head brigand looked a little worse for wear, and his other people were on their feet and over to him in an instant. He shook them all off and came over to where the Doctor and Tegan were seated.

"Before anything else happens," he said, "who the hell are you?"

"Not bounty hunters," said the Doctor.

"And I'm just supposed to take your word for that?"

"Yes."

Travis didn't look as if he cared to do that. "You don't look like bounty hunters...but then the best ones never do." He studied them thoughtfully for a long, uncomfortable few seconds that were coming up to a full minute, then said, "Let's assume I believe you. Next question is: what're you doing with Alhazred?"

"Alhazred told us you'd abducted Turlough--"

"He came of his own free will."

"Yes, so he's said. However, we didn't know that at the time, and we were rather concerned. Alhazred said he knew where you were going, and that if we wanted to follow we would have to bring him along."

"Oh, and I'll bet he kicked and screamed all the way." Travis folded his arms over his chest, glowering down at the Doctor. "I hope you realize he used you, Doctor. The man's a lunatic occultist who may have been responsible for the deaths of six friends of mine; he did nearly make another nearly lose her mind."

Well, this was progress of a sort. "Could you expand on that?"

Travis looked at him, blue eyes unreadable. "I could." And to the Doctor's surprise, he did, giving considerable background information. Evidently, thought the Time Lord, this intergalactic Robin Hood wasn't quite as prone to unreasonable behavior as his crew. Perhaps that was why he led, and they followed. The Doctor let it go and paid close attention to what Travis was telling him. Combined with what he already knew, it did go a ways towards confirming that the reason the Necromancer was so anxious to get to this planet was not because it was a grand place for a holiday.

"He really did seem to be reluctant to come though," said Tegan. "At first."

The glower hadn't faded from Travis' face. "I don't doubt he's as terrified as obsessed about this planet. Especially if it's the legends that draw him--and he believes them."

The Doctor'd had enough of this man glaring down at him, and stood to face him. "Do you believe the legends, Dr. Travis?"

"I don't know enough to say one way or the other. I will say that, given what is known of this civilization, any possibility deserves serious consideration. No matter how outside the realms of our previous experience it may be."

He was halfway willing to believe it, the Doctor thought. At least that there were things outside this plane of reality. And he didn't like believing it, did he? "What exactly is the legend?"

Travis sat down, cross-legged, the others also taking seats. Then he began, "The Paanmaats were supposed to have been the most powerful beings in this galaxy, a very long time ago. It's said they had found the means of...opening portals, gateways, to other dimensions. That they attempted to extend their empire to these other dimensions, and to achieve that they made a pact with a supernatural being. But, something went wrong. Either the Paanmaats got too greedy, or the being they had dealt with was too powerful for them to handle. The legend's uniformly fuzzy on the details." He shrugged slightly. "Well, something happened, something overwhelmed the Paanmaats, swallowed them up and spirited them away, leaving," he gestured about him, "this. And that's all anybody knows."

"What do you think happened?"

"I don't know, and I don't intend to speculate."

"You said there are always possibilities," Rafferty reminded him.

"And I still do, Danny, but a lot of haphazard theorizing won't get us anywhere. Right, Doctor?"

"Agreed. But perhaps we can do a little more than theorize. There's a device back at my TARDIS that I think might give us some answers. If you'd care to accompany me there...?"

"It's not that Police Box thing?" said Rafferty. "Your ship, I mean."

"I'm afraid it is."

Travis leveled a look at the Time Lord that clearly said, 'get serious'. Out loud he said, "What is it?"

"A TARDIS. Stands for Time And Relative Dimensions In Space."

Travis frowned, looked at Turlough. "You said it wasn't a time machine."

"No. I asked if you'd believe me if I told you that's what it was."

Travis continued to look disgruntled, but got to his feet, saying, "All right, Doctor, I'll trust you a little further."

"You magnanimity's overwhelming," the Doctor said, dry as the sand around them.

A smile briefly quirked Travis' mouth, then he turned to his people. "Kim, you stay here with Anna and Garin; Danny, you come with me."

"Bring back some coats and blankets," Anna said. "It's going to be a cold night."

"Something to eat might be nice, too," said Garin. He'd stopped pawing the ground as soon as Travis had returned, the Doctor had noted. "Do we keep digging?"

"Might as well," Travis told him. "Unless you think we can get a good price for sand and rocks."

Garin actually came up with a smile.

Travis returned it, then turned back to the Doctor, gesturing with an exaggerated expansiveness. "After you."

The Doctor decided that one of these days he was going to make a study of the phenomenon which caused the topography of a place to alter with the onset of darkness. All of a sudden there were tumbled columns to trip one, blocks of stone to smash one's knee against, and other debris that impeded progress, and which he was sure hadn't been there before. The trio of moons glimmered brightly, but there were still eerie shadows, little sounds that made gooseflesh of even a Time Lord's arms. He put it down to the story Travis had told, augmented by the reality of these weird ruins.

At least Turlough had chosen to accompany him and Tegan. That was some small comfort, though he wasn't going to assume too much. The boy did seem a little more at ease than usual, as though some weight had been lifted from his shoulders. Perhaps he, like the Doctor, had noticed that the ruins through which they passed bore an uncanny resemblance to those displayed in that crystal. And perhaps he took some comfort in seeing that, here they were in that projected setting, and nothing untoward had occurred between them.

Of course it was early days yet.

The Doctor was annoyed at himself for that thought, but it was a disconcerting thing: watching a friend shoot you down. It was difficult to distance himself.

"There it is," the Doctor said, finally spotting the TARDIS, looking utterly out of place amidst this alien shambles. "How much further is your ship?"

"Not much," said Travis. "What exactly did we come here for?"

"Come and see," the Doctor invited, disappearing inside with his companions and leaving the door ajar.

Travis and Rafferty exchanged doubtful looks, then followed--and found themselves staring rather stupidly at the TARDIS control room.

"Yes, I know," said the Doctor.

"What?" Rafferty said.

"It's bigger inside than out."

"Kind've obvious really." Rafferty shook his head, leaned close to Travis. "Tell me he does it with mirrors."

"Why?"

"'Cause this is blowing my mind."

"You get used to it, in time," said the Doctor. He gestured them to an inner door. "If you'll come this way, please," he said, and led them to Alhazred's room, where the crystal computer waited.

"That's the wizard's crystal ball," said Rafferty. "What good is it to us?"

"Ah, but it isn't a crystal ball," said the Doctor.

"It isn't? What is it then?"

The Time Lord frowned. "I'm not entirely sure, to tell you the truth. Part computer, part...well, something else. But it's from this planet, and I think it could be important; Alhazred wanted it rather badly."

"How do you know it's an artifact of Paanmaatsaan?" Travis moved closer, examining the crystal with more interest.

The Doctor shook his head. "Nothing Alhazred's said, more what he wouldn't say, if you see what I mean."

"Not entirely, no. But you could be right." Travis poked and prodded the crystal, tapped it. "You think this can help us?"

"I do," said the Doctor, picking it up; it was surprisingly light. "Shall we go to your ship now?"

It was a short walk back to the Recovery, sitting on the desert plain and somehow looking much less anachronistic than the TARDIS. The Doctor stopped to admire the sleek, powerful-looking ship. It wasn't quite what he would have expected this gang to be gadding about the galaxy in; it had an almost elegant look to it, not a hint of battered scruffiness.

"Fast?"

Travis glanced at him with that ironic half smile again. "Is there any point in having a slow privateer?"

"Where did you get it? It looks like someone's space yacht."

"It probably was, once upon a time." Travis shot an amused look at Rafferty. "We acquired it creatively."

An in-joke apparently, the Doctor thought.

Travis went up the ramp, taking out his communicator and speaking to the onboard computer. "Voice print-activated lock," he told the Doctor. "Danny's idea."

"I see. You...didn't want anyone to acquire it from you."

"Something like that." The hatch slid up and they went inside.

Travis and Rafferty went off to fetch supplies, leaving the Doctor and his companions in the corridor. Unable to restrain his curiosity, the Doctor decided to have a look around, and the trio were soon on the flight deck, where the Time Lord was fiddling with the controls when Travis' voice came from behind him:

"By all means, make yourself at home, Doctor."

The Doctor swiveled the chair around, stood up. "I was only looking, admiring, if you like."

"Not much, no. If you've seen quite enough...?"

"Come along," the Doctor said to Tegan and Turlough, uneasy witnesses to the exchange.

They met Rafferty at the hatch, a pile of items at his feet. "What was he doing?"

"Pushing his luck," said Travis, then stalked down the ramp, Rafferty scooping an armful of stuff and hurrying after. The Doctor got the impression he could stay or follow, and that it was of no interest whatsoever to Allan Michael Travis.

"I don't think he trusts us, Doctor," said Turlough.
The Doctor gave him a curious, searching look. "That's a scarce commodity at the best of times, isn't it?"

Turlough returned an innocent look.

The entry hatch hissed closed, startling all of them. The Doctor shrugged, then set out after Travis and Rafferty.

* * * * *

Travis drew his jacket closer around him, edging near the fire. It was definitely cold now, his breath misting. He tilted his head back, scanning the night sky; perfectly clear, so at least they wouldn't get rained on. That was something.

They had managed to finish digging out the entrance to the temple, not much more than a tunnel up the steps, but it would do. He had decided to wait until morning to go inside. Something to eat, and some rest had been more to everyone's liking just then anyway, even Garin. For his part, Travis had a bad case of the fidgets, wanting very much to be inside the temple, but he was impressing himself with his self-restraint.

He glanced around at the others, lingering on the Doctor and his companions. Despite everything, his instinct was to trust the Doctor, it was just that after awhile it became second nature to be suspicious of everyone; a hazard of the profession, he supposed. Trust no one, deny everything, and always know your escape route. But, just as you could be only so cynical, constant paranoia could get tiresome, too.

He'd give the Doctor the benefit of the doubt. For the most part.

He yawned, stretched, looked up as Rafferty came over, sleepy and muzzy still.

"Wanna break?"

Travis smiled. "Are you volunteering to stand watch?"

"Volunteering to sit watch. You got pounded pretty good today; go get some sleep." Rafferty shivered, settling himself down near the fire.

"Okay. Give Garin a call in awhile." Travis went over to a block of stone, resting his back against it, causing Anna to stir sleepily but not wake; she just turned and nuzzled into his chest as he pulled the blanket up and put an arm around her. With her warm breathing lulling him, he drifted off...

...He felt hemmed in, and cracked an eye open, looking irritably at the lightening sky. Anna was still snuggled up against him, and Rafferty had slumped against his other side, his head resting on Travis' shoulder. Shaking his own head, Travis carefully pushed Rafferty back, disentangled from Anna, and stifled a groan as he got to his feet. Carefully stretching he looked around, noting that everyone else was still sleeping--even Garin, sprawled over the steps. Funny, the young thief was usually more reliable than that...Travis' eyes narrowed as he looked at Garin, at the way he lay, then he was sprinting for the steps, reaching to feel for a pulse, and feeling a rush of relief at the steady throbbing he felt in the throat. He ran a hand lightly over Garin's head, encountered a sticky lump, then carefully eased Garin onto his back.

The gray eyes flickered open, gazing up at him fuzzily. "Alhazred...temple...couldn't stop..."

"Shh." Travis cradled his head, looking up at the temple door that stood ajar now. He called to the others.

Kimri was on her feet at once and over to them. "What happened?"

"Hazard a guess," Travis said, then left Garin to her care and went to the door. Rafferty and Anna crowded behind, effectively blocking the Doctor, Tegan, and Turlough, who'd been awakened by the commotion and were trying to horn in on things. Travis eased the door back, briefly taking in the gold-plating, the hieroglyphics; there might be time, later, to study them. The thing now was to find out what Alhazred was up to.

They went in, finding themselves in a vestibule that led to the nave of the temple, dominated by the altar at the far end of the basilica. And it was spectacular. More murals, all of these in perfect condition, representing all aspects of daily Paanmaat life. (And once again, the Paanmaats were attended by those amphibious types.) There were niches all along one wall, each holding an exquisitely carved statue, representing the pantheon of gods they had worshipped; each one was over seven feet in height, solid gold, sparkling with jewels. Everything was golden and bejeweled, even the altar, which stood high and removed from un-priestly hands.

Travis found himself drawn up there, mounting the steps and going to it, resting his hands on the top,

looking out and trying to imagine what it might have been like, all those thousands of years ago, when the Paanmaats would have crowded in here, in all their grandiose confidence that they would be masters of their fate for time immemorial.

"Trav," Rafferty said, breaking the spell. "Alhazred's not here."

"Hmm?" Travis snapped to, looking about again. It was true, there was no sign of the Necromancer, although he could be hiding almost anywhere. Pamela'd said there was a door, but all he saw was a blank stretch of wall behind the altar. "Are you sure he came in here, Garin?"

"Of course I am."

Well, since Alhazred had the key back--"What the hell." He'd touched a button on the side of the altar. He pressed it, and the top of the altar rolled back to reveal an elaborate console. "Doctor, come have a look at this."

"Interesting," the Time Lord murmured as he examined the console. "The question is, Dr. Travis, what's it for? Hmm?" He peered expectantly at the archaeologist.

"As I said, information on this culture is scant and often apocryphal. I've never heard of any theory that they incorporated electronic gadgetry into their religious services."

"Then what is this?"

Travis rubbed his chin, looking all about the basilica. As he remembered it, the Paanmaats had not believed in a separation of church and state; the church in many ways was the state, in fact. The priesthood was supposed to be the greatest aspiration a young Paanmaat could have. So, if they had actually discovered the means of cross-dimension travelling, might they not have done it from their temples?

"Doctor, maybe this is the doorway."

"Umm. But how do we open it?"

Travis leaned over the console, scanning its surface intently. There was a recess there, just the right shape and size to match the medallion--the key--and the ridges and indentations that had been on its backside would have held it securely in place here, allowing for interface between key and console. So, if Alhazred had gotten here he might be in some dimension now. How were they going to find him, follow him, since he'd taken the key with him?

The Doctor touched his arm. "Look at this."

Travis looked. Another button had caused an auxiliary console to slide out of the base of the altar and telescope until it was level with the other. There was very little on it, however: two switches, a power gauge, and a rectangular recess with a complex of exposed circuitry.

"Turlough!" The Doctor was looking excited. "Bring the crystal up here." When the boy had complied, the Time Lord handed it to Travis. "Turn it upside down, please," he said, and when Travis complied the Doctor examined the base of the crystal, and then snapped off the bottom. Grinning at Travis, he said, "How much would you care to wager that our glowing friend here controls this whole system?"

Travis just stood back as the Doctor settled the crystal into the recess, then watched him studying the switches. The Doctor touched the left one, and nothing happened; touched the other and there was a surge of power throbbing through the crystal, and it glowed and pulsed with that purple light, the facets bright and clear. It hummed at them enthusiastically, and Travis felt as though something reached out and lightly brushed his mind. As he continued to watch, one of the facets went cloudy, then flickered, and lit with an image of Alhazred entering the temple, coming up here to the altar and fitting the key into place. Then the blank wall behind them went blurry, dissolving and filling with a pinkish-gray mist. Alhazred stepped into it, and vanished. The facet cleared, and the crystal hummed at them with almost perky expectation.

Travis cast a look at the Doctor. "Could this thing be telepathic?"

The Doctor frowned, hands thrust deep into his pockets. "Not in the usual sense, I don't think. Alhazred said that it taps the subconscious mind, and then shows you what's happened to you, or what might. I expect it's all electrical impulses."

"Why did it show us what Alhazred did?"

The Doctor reached out to touch the crystal, jerked his hand back. "Hmm! Rather like putting your finger in a socket--"

"Do that often, do you?"

The Doctor spared Travis a glance. "We want to know what Alhazred is up to; perhaps this device perceives that his actions affect what becomes of us."

"But where did he go?" Rafferty wanted to know.

"Some other...somewhere." Travis shrugged, shook his head. He went over to the wall, put out a hand to touch it and found it absolutely solid. If this was the doorway Pamela had spoken of, where exactly did it

go--and why did Alhazred want to be there. "My friend told me that if Alhazred came back here, he would unleash some great evil," he said softly, almost to himself. "What could she have meant?"

The Doctor didn't know if the question was meant for him, but answered it anyway. "I believe he is looking for Cthulhu."

"Ca--who--loo?" said Rafferty.

"Cthulhu," the Doctor repeated. He looked at Travis. "Does that name mean anything to you?"

Travis shook his head. "Should it?"

"Perhaps not. And I don't think we have time now for any lengthy explanations; we're going to have to get after Alhazred."

"I did promise Pamela I'd stop him."

"Then we'd best be getting on with it."

"Getting on with what?" Garin said.

Travis glanced at him. "Following Alhazred."

"What? Through there?" This from Rafferty, who looked as if he would place that activity very low on his list of things to do. "We don't know where he went, we don't know anything. He just stepped into mist, and--poof--no more Alhazred!"

None of the others seemed any more enthused about this venture, and it really didn't surprise Travis; a part of him wasn't too keen on it either, but he really didn't have any choice. He turned to regard his crew. "I have to do this, but there's no reason for you to come with me, if you choose not to. It's entirely your choice."

As the four of them moved off to huddle, Travis looked at the Doctor. "Since Alhazred took the key--"

"How do we open the door?"

Travis frowned. "What makes you think you're included in this?"

The Doctor gave him a rather cheeky grin. "Because you'll need me." He was studying the crystal intently again, then closed his eyes as though in deep concentration, and Travis moved to stand at his shoulder, watching one of the facets go cloudy again, then flicker and light with images. He and the Doctor were shown turning to watch the wall dissolve, and then stepping into that mist, disappearing. The facet cleared and the Doctor opened his eyes, turning to Travis. "I think the crystal controls this whole thing; I think it can open the way for us."

"Well then," said Kimri, "what are we waiting for?"

Travis looked at her, at the others, smiling warmly. He had thought they might stick with him, but it still felt nice to have it confirmed. "Thank you. All right then, Doctor, what do we do?"

But the Doctor was looking at his companions. "You could wait in the TARDIS."

"Oh yes?" said Tegan. "And be stranded here if you don't make it back? No thanks, Doctor; you're not leaving me behind again."

Turlough just continued to look utterly bored by it all.

The Doctor shrugged, then moved back to the crystal, concentrating again. The crystal hummed and throbbed with greater intensity, glowing brightly. And the wall began to shimmer and blur, dissolving, filling with that grayish-pink mist.

The eight of them exchanged looks of varying degrees of wariness, then Travis and the Doctor stepped forward. The mist was cool, dry, odorless, enveloping them completely, obscuring vision and distorting sound. There was a moment of uncomfortable disorientation, and then the mist began to clear and they found themselves on the proverbial blasted heath. Black and desolate, withered vegetation clinging to weathered rock, and the only sounds were the keening of sea birds and the crash of breakers. The sky above was gray, heavy with clouds. And it was cold.

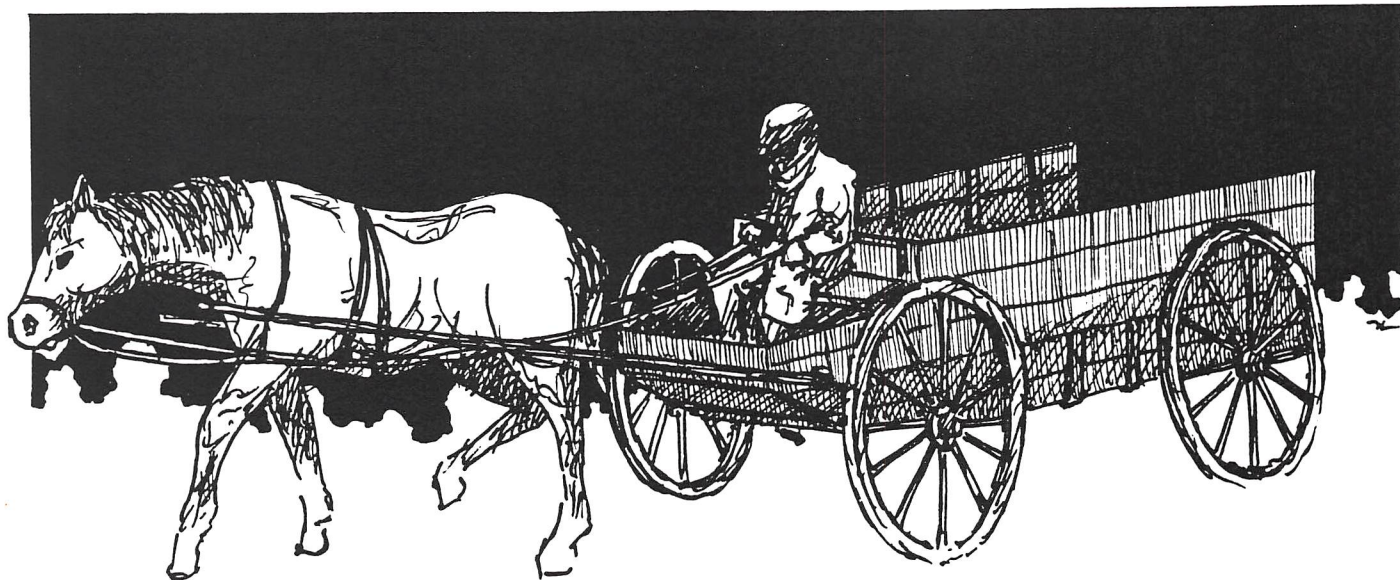
Even as they were taking this in, the others began appearing, all looking apprehensive, and then startled, as if this wasn't quite what they'd expected on the other side.

"Where are we?" said Tegan.

The Doctor gave her a pained look. "Keep an eye peeled for a signpost, why don't you?" He moved off, assuming the others would follow; his companions fell in beside him, obviously used to this sort of thing.

Travis exchanged looks with his crew, shrugged, and followed.

They hadn't gone very far when a new sound came to them, a creaking-clopping sound that drew gradually closer. They stopped to look behind, watching as a dilapidated wagon came into view, drawn by equally dilapidated horses. The man driving the wagon didn't look any too bright and cheery either, wrapped in a



heavy coat, a cap pulled low on his forehead. He brought the wagon to a halt, staring at them with neither hostility, welcome, or interest.

"Who ye be?"

"Strangers," said the Doctor.

"I know ye for strangers; they always be strangers come here."

"We're looking for someone," said Travis. "A man, also a stranger..."

"Aye. What be his name?"

"Alhazred."

"Know no one by that name."

Travis hardly thought he would. "Is there a town here?"

"Aye, there be a town; that be where I'm goin'."

"Could you take us there?" said the Doctor, trying to get in on things again.

"Aye."

With no more explicit invitation coming, they just clambered aboard, and without further conversation their new friend flicked the reins and got the lethargic horses going again, the creaky wagon bumping over the road.

After awhile the man said, "There be the town."

They looked around, not knowing what to expect. A thoroughly depressed-looking village was built around a bay, seeming to spring straight from the black rock. Except for that aura of dull wretchedness it might have been any small village on Earth, several centuries ago, tucked away in the New England hills. Travis had seen photographs of such places, but they had always looked rather cozy and inviting to him. There was nothing in the least appealing about this place.

The Doctor touched his arm, and pointed.

Travis looked, and saw a signpost: ARKHAM, 1 mile.

"So?"

"Just some confirmation," was the Time Lord's unhelpful reply, and Travis made up his mind to find out what the man knew about all this before very much more time had gone by.

They rode down into Arkham, the wagon pulling up outside an inn, the driver turning to look at them. "You be wanting off here, I expect." His gaze lingered on Kimri and Garin, taking in their cat-like eyes, uneasy all of a sudden. "There be rooms for your sort here."

"What do you mean--our sort?" Travis wondered why the man was suddenly so wary of them. "Do you get a lot of strangers through here?"

"There always be some."

They were all scrambling from the wagon, various parts of their anatomy sore from the bumpy ride. The few passerby in the street gave them cautious looks, and a few made the hex symbol, directed specifically at Kimri and Garin.

Looking up at the driver, Travis said, "You said you'd never heard of Alhazred, how about Cthulhu?"

Now the driver looked truly alarmed, making the hex sign, and whipping the tired horses into a half-hearted trot, obviously anxious to get away from these strangers who asked such upsetting questions.

"That probably wasn't a good idea," said the Doctor, drawing a sharp look from Travis. The Time Lord couldn't quite contain a smile; he couldn't help feeling that Travis needed to be taken down a peg or two

(which was just what Travis thought about him). "Now, we can continue to blunder around here, getting very little accomplished in all likelihood, or--"

"Or we can just kick back and let you solve all our problems." Travis' tone made it clear what he thought of that idea.

The Doctor's expression was a blend of injured sternness. "I was going to suggest that we pool our talents."

"Oh." Travis looked around, shrugged, shifted from one foot to the other, came up with a smile. "Sorry, Doctor. Of course you're right. Since you seem to know an awful lot about this Cthulhu, how about cluing in the rest of us? That would be a good place to start."

"I intended to," the Doctor said, and led the way inside.

The inn was dimly lit, and almost uncomfortably warm. There was an unpleasant aroma of fish, too. Nor did there seem to be anyone around, until the Doctor rang the bell at the registry desk. A curtain rippled and someone came out to them. The person was unidentifiable, even to sex, clad in a bulky coat, throat swathed in a scarf, hands gloved, and a woolen cap pulled low on its forehead.

The Doctor and Travis exchanged curious, uneasy looks.

The innkeeper looked at them, and in a whispery voice said, "Welcome to Arkham. Will you be staying?"

"Not long, said the Doctor. "May we have a room?"

"Just one, sir?"

"Yes," the Doctor said, and Travis heard Rafferty say, "This could get kinky," followed by a sound that indicated one of the ladies had kicked him.

After they had been shown to a room, and the innkeeper departed, the Doctor got down to business with the promised explanation. With few interruptions he told how all of this had been written about in the early 20th Century by a man named H.P. Lovecraft. Elder gods and ancient ones, amphibious servants of Cthulhu that interbred with humans, other worlds in other dimensions, and all of it centering around the writings of one Abdul Alhazred. When he'd finished, the Doctor looked across at Travis, who sat with dark brows drawn together in a thoughtful frown.

"Any comments?"

Travis cocked an eyebrow. "Only that it sounds wonderfully bizarre...and that I have encountered similar mythos."

Rafferty leaned forward. "These hybrid dudes, d'you reckon our friendly innkeeper might be one of 'em?"

"It struck me as a possibility."

"And all these people," said Tegan. "This town. Is it real?"

"In this dimension? Absolutely."

"But where do they come from?" said Turlough. "Is this their home, or were they brought here?"

Travis answered this time. "It could be that their ancestors were brought here, by Cthulhu's servants." He made a wry grimace, ran a hand through his hair. "So what do we do? This isn't quite what I was anticipating." Not even remotely.

Anna leaned forward in her chair, saying, "And what about Alhazred? I did a full check on him, Doctor, and nothing of what I found fits in with what you've told us. He was born on Destran fifty-five years ago, and has been involved with the occult most of his life. But he's never written anything, least of all this Necronomicon. I'm not up on the latest in time travel, but it sounds like we've got a major paradox."

"Yes," the Doctor said, slowly. "That is rather difficult to explain."

"Could there be...two Alhazred?" Tegan said. "Ours, and the one who wrote that book?"

The Doctor looked at her thoughtfully. "Not two of him, exactly, but--"

"The same man in two different times and places," said Travis, catching on.

"Well, how would that be possible?" Rafferty wanted to know.

Travis turned to him. "Try this, Danny. Alhazred comes here, seeking knowledge and power. Part of what he learns is how to work these portals. Somehow he gains access to Earth, centuries past, and writes that book." He shrugged. "It's a possible scenario."

The Doctor gave him an approving look. "That was very nicely reasoned, Dr. Travis."

"Thank you; your approval means a lot to me."

The Doctor shot him a suspicious look, somehow doubting the sincerity of that remark. "Yes. Well, we'd best be getting on with things, hadn't we?"

"Where do we start?"

"I expect we'd cover more ground if we split up, don't you?"

"Makes sense." Travis got up. "Shall we meet back here, then?"

"Yes." The Doctor held out a hand. "We work together. Agreed?"

Travis glanced at his crew, nodded, shook the proffered hand. "Agreed."

* * * * *

The ideal place to obtain information in this sort of community, the Doctor decided, was at the library. Especially the Arkham Library. Accordingly, he led Tegan and Turlough there, explaining that in a situation like this it was a good idea to learn the lay of the land, and then logically deduce where Alhazred was likely to be found.

"Why didn't you mention that to Travis?" said Tegan.

"Because he'd rather save the universe single-handedly," was the rather hard-edged reply from Turlough.

The Doctor shot him a sharp look. "When this is over, Turlough, you and I are going to have a long talk." Whatever the problem was, it had to be resolved. If that meant Turlough leaving, well, so be it. They were too often in critical situations where trust was essential; he and Tegan had to feel that they could rely upon Turlough, and right now they couldn't. The Doctor very much wanted to give the boy the benefit of the doubt, a chance to explain, to work out a solution to this latent hostility. But Turlough had to meet him halfway.

"And it's not a matter of heroics," the Doctor told him. "I just think this is a quicker way to find Alhazred, and I'd rather we found him before Dr. Travis."

"You don't trust him?" Tegan said.

The Doctor smiled. "I trust Dr. Travis exactly the same way he trusts me." Which was about as far as they could throw each other. "Here we are," he added as they reached the library. "Let's have a look."

The library didn't look to be a center of community life, judging by the complete absence of patrons. There was a librarian on duty, a woman who viewed them with genteel alarm, and watched them carefully as if expecting they'd try and nick something.

"What's the matter with these people?" Tegan whispered as the Doctor began leafing through a heavy volume of local history. "Why are they so afraid?"

"Wouldn't you be? Considering what Cthulhu feeds on?" The Doctor slipped on his half-frames, peering intently at a map he'd found. "Remember what Travis' friend told him, that her companions were consumed."

"Can't say I like the sound of that," was Turlough's comment.

Tegan gave him a sour look. "And who's polling for your opinion?"

"At least I have some opinions of my own--and more varied vocabulary than: Why, Doctor; How, Doctor; What, Doctor." Turlough's tone was unpleasantly mocking.

Tegan shot back with, "That's better than: It's not my fault, Doctor. Master of the multiple alibi, aren't you?"

She had a point there, the Doctor had to admit, but he didn't care for this line of discussion. There was nothing to be gained by sniping at each other.

"This isn't accomplishing anything," he told the two of them. "Let's concentrate our energies on something more productive, hmm?" He brought their attention to the map. "This cove here," he indicated a spot just north of the town. "Do you see this causeway?" They said that they did. "Now, where do you suppose that leads?"

"Do you really expect an answer?" Tegan asked.

"If memory serves," and he was sure that it did, "Cthulhu resides on an island which emerges from the ocean depths every now and then. I'm wondering if this causeway mightn't lead to such an island. Bears investigation at least, wouldn't you say?"

"Doctor." Turlough'd spotted something in a glass case. "Come look at this."

A book was locked away there: leather-bound, a bit worn, but all in all in rather remarkable condition.

"So that's The Necronomicon," the Doctor murmured. He would dearly love to have a look at it, and motioned the librarian over--she was making a bee-line for them anyway. "Might we examine this book?"

"No, I'm afraid that's quite out of the question."

"Why?"

She looked uncertain. "It's too valuable. It's only used by researchers at the university."

"Well, but--"

"I'm afraid you'll have to come back at some other time, sir. It's time to close now."

The Doctor stared at her, not believing he'd reached an impasse like this, but short of becoming quite

rude he had no choice but to depart. Outside on the steps, he looked at the door as it swung closed with a solid thud. "How very curious."

"Doctor," said Tegan, "how important is it that you have a look at that book?"

"Difficult to say. Helpful, certainly. Why?"

"Well, I was just thinking that we do know some people who could probably get it for you."

The Doctor looked at her. "Tegan. Are you suggesting I ask Travis and his crew to steal it?"

She looked back innocently. "We may as well use our resources."

He tried to look sternly disapproving, but a smile was playing with his eyes. "Where do you suppose they've gotten themselves to?"

* * * * *

The Recovery crew were poking around a musty bookshop, also in search of useful information. The shopkeeper was a small man who peered at them from behind the counter, giving the impression that he would be terribly, terribly happy if they would please go away--but didn't want to offend them.

"Sort of place you dream of retiring to, innit?" Rafferty remarked, checking out a rack of medallions. "Hey!" he called to the shopkeeper. "What're these?"

The man started. "They be charms, sir, to ward off evil."

"What sort of evil?" said Travis.

The man stared up at him. "Oh, I couldn't say that, sir."

Garin reached over, grabbing him by the shirt front and pulling the alarmed man half over the counter. "Why the hell not?"

"Garin." Travis looked at him. "That's enough of that," he said, and Garin let the man go. "Have you ever heard of tact?"

"Never heard of it getting anything accomplished," said Garin, peevish again. "What are we doing here? We're just wasting time!"

"Well, if you have any brilliant ideas, let's hear them."

Garin grumped something in his native tongue, and moved off, arms folded, putting Travis in mind of a very large, put out cat.

Smiling, he approached the shopkeeper, who stepped back from the counter and eyed him warily. "We're on a journey. A quest, if you like. An evil necromancer has threatened to unleash a terrible evil. So terrible that it could consume the cosmos. Now, you wouldn't like to see that, would you?" His voice had a quiet, reasonable urgency as he spoke to the man.

The man's eyes widened. "Oh, well, no sir. I wouldn't care for that. But what can I do?"

"You could answer some questions."

"Oh, sir, I don't know if that be a good idea. There be things about that it don't pay to talk of."

Travis looked understanding. "I do sympathize with your delicate position; however, I must ask that you try and appreciate our situation."

The shopkeeper looked at him with a doleful expression. "Must you?"

Rafferty's laugh was abruptly cut off by Anna's elbow in his ribs.

Travis shot him a look, then turned back to the shopkeeper. "It's about," he dropped his voice to a whisper, "Cthulhu." The shopkeeper's expression grew truly alarmed, and he started to move away. Travis caught him by the arm, maintaining a firm, but not threatening hold on the man. With his best smile, he said, "Now, if there's nothing to any of this, you shouldn't be afraid to tell us. What's the harm in sharing some of the local folklore?"

"But it isn't folklore, sir, truly it isn't...There do be things."

"What kind of things?"

The shopkeeper hesitated. "The Deep Ones, and...what you said."

"Cthulhu?"

The man nodded furtively, looking around at the dark corners of the shop...just like Alhazred, just like Pamela. Travis was beginning to see that he may have done Pamela a great disservice in thinking her mad.

"Who are the Deep Ones?"

"His servants."

Yes, that made sense. Probably these Deep Ones had acted as Cthulhu's emissaries to the Paanmaats, posing as their servants, but really acting as Cthulhu's eyes and ears outside this world; very necessary to a creature that spent a great deal of time in suspended animation--if he was putting the right interpretation on

those lines the Doctor had quoted. It was all starting to come together. But what had they done to the Paanmaats? And, more importantly, how far ahead of time was Alhazred?

"Where can we find Cthulhu?" he asked the shopkeeper.

"Oh, sir, why would you want to do that?"

"As I said, we're on a quest. We have to finish up somewhere, or else we've failed. Now, where is Cthulhu?"

The shopkeeper stared up at him, shaking his head regretfully. "Oh, dear, dear, dear," he murmured fretfully as he rummaged through a pile of stuff at the counter. "If you do insist, sir," he spread out a map, "this be where you want to go," and he pointed to the cove and causeway north of Arkham.

"Uh-huh." Travis took a notebook and pen from a jacket pocket, sketching a rough copy of the map. "Thank you. That tells we where, now we need to know what we have to look forward to." He smiled again. "I'm afraid you're not quite done with us."

The shopkeeper looked at him with fearful resignation. "I feared I wouldn't be," he said, and sighed deeply.

Travis suppressed a broader smile, and started pressing for details.

* * * * *

There weren't many places in Arkham that stayed open past dusk, so it hadn't been hard for the Doctor to find Travis and his crew, catching up with them just as they were leaving the bookshop. It didn't take them long to compare notes, and find they'd learned the same things.

"Zachie in there, the shopkeeper," said Travis, "came up with a couple of extras though."

"Which were?"

"That Alhazred is here--"

"Did you ever doubt it?"

"A little confirmation never hurts, Doctor. Anyway, he's been in the shop, too, earlier, asking similar questions--but more detailed and specific. Like he was trying to confirm something. It seems this is a special time, which accounts for everyone being so jumpy. According to Zachie, at midnight Cthulhu's island--"

"Will emerge from the ocean depths," the Doctor finished, drawing an irritated look from Travis, which he ignored. "Small wonder that Alhazred was so anxious to get here." No doubt the man was prepared to wait for however long it might take to accomplish whatever he was up to, but the Doctor imagined he'd been rubbing his hands with glee at his luck in the timing. "Your friend in there wouldn't know where our mystical companion's got to, would he?"

Travis shook his head.

"I thought not. Well, anything else?"

"I don't know how this ties in, but Zachie does a sideline business in occult paraphernalia--charms and such." Looking a tad embarrassed, Travis drew a charm from inside his shirt, adding, "He insisted we all buy one of these. Anyway, Alhazred bought a lot of stuff, too. What he means to get up to with it all..." Travis shrugged, put the charm necklace back in his shirt.

Rafferty had been shifting from foot to foot, looking back and forth between them. Now he said, "You two're talking like this is all real."

"It is, Danny."

"No, but, I mean...Magic, witchcraft...You can't really cast spells, and conjure up demons, stuff like that. I can understand someone like Zachie believing in it all, but--"

"But you can't credit rational, sophisticated people with such credulity," said the Doctor. "Is that it?"

"Yeah. It's screwy."

The Doctor smiled. "It contradicts the universe as we know it--"

"--but this is not the universe as we know," Travis finished. "I think we have to accept that, here, paranormal phenomenon is real."

"And I think it's time we acquainted ourselves more intimately with the subject matter." Lowering his voice to a whisper, the Doctor said, "Dr. Travis, there's a book at the local library I'd like to have a look at. Do you suppose you might...creatively acquire it for me?"

Travis cocked an eyebrow, looking interested. "Just tell us what and where, Doctor."

A short while later, they were all lurking across from the library, watching the librarian come out, pause long enough to lock the door behind her, then hurry for home. As soon as she was out of sight, Rafferty and Garin broke from the huddle and went to scout out the territory. Before long, Rafferty popped out of some shrubbery on the left and waved the rest of them over.

"Piece of cake," he said. "Gary could open it with his eyes closed." He led them to back entrance, the door already ajar and Garin lounging there.

"Yes, well, let's hope the rest of it's as easy," said the Doctor, thinking this bunch could do with a dose of modesty.

Travis, though, looked pleased. "You'll get your book, Doctor, that I can guarantee. Just be happy this caper's on the house." He pushed the door back, danced the beam of a flashlight (purchased at Zachie's) along the dark hallway, then drew back to gesture the Time Lord forward. "Please, after you."

"Thank you, but by all means, after you."

Suspicion flickered over Travis' face, then he smiled again. "Very well." But as he went in the Time Lord was right at his shoulder.

"Where to?" Travis said, his voice sounding unnaturally loud in the absolute quiet, even though he whispered.

The Doctor cast around, getting his bearings. "This way," he decided, and led them off.

A couple of wrong turns later, they finally found themselves in the room where The Necronomicon was kept. Rafferty and Garin took charge of matters again, checking the case over carefully, disconnecting a fairly basic alarm. Then Rafferty drew a case from a pocket, went to work on the case itself, and five seconds later stepped back from it.

"This is hardly worth the bother," he grumped, used to far greater challenges.

Tegan gave him a skeptical look. "No doubt you could've opened it blindfolded, standing on your head, with both hands tied behind you."

"Sure, do it all the time," he said, grinning.

"Don't encourage him," Anna said, stretching up on tiptoe to look over Travis' shoulder, who was looking over the Doctor's.

The Time Lord reached a tentative hand to the book, very carefully picked it up and opened it. He wasn't too sure what he expected to happen. A swell of suitably portentous music, perhaps, something to make the moment dramatic. But the leather binding just creaked a bit, and the pages rustled as he leafed through them. It was filled with illustrations of fantastic creatures and places, astronomical conjunctions by which the openings in the dimensional gateways were calculated, and a wealth of mystic lore and conjurations.

"Worth the bother, Doctor?" said Travis.

"Oh yes. This should prove quite useful. Thank you."

"Anytime."

"Is this the time and place to look at it though?" wondered Turlough.

The Doctor glanced at him. "Ordinarily, no. But I think it's unlikely we'll be disturbed tonight." The Doctor went over to one of the tables, settling down with the book and flashlight, taking out his half-frames. He cast a look at Travis as he settled them on his nose. "Any objections to going through this?"

"No. Not at the moment." Travis looked at his crew, illuminated in the light that shone through the windows. "Since we know Alhazred's lurking about somewhere--and someone could wander by--how about keeping watch?"

Anna nodded, hooked her arms through Garin's and Rafferty's. "Come on, guys. Kim?"

Kimri looked at Travis. "If we find Alhazred?"

"Sit on him."

She nodded.

"Kim!"

"Right behind you," Kimri said, and hurried off.

Tegan and Turlough exchanged sympathetic looks, then pulled out chairs and made themselves comfortable. The Doctor would eventually remember they were around, but just now he was completely absorbed in necromancy, only taking time to apprise Travis of some detail every now and then.

Travis had tilted his chair back, long legs propped against the table. "From what you've said, Doctor, it sounds like doing a deal with Cthulhu is very one-sided. The Paanmaats certainly lost out. What's Alhazred hope to gain?"

The Doctor removed his half-frames, gesturing with them as he spoke. "We

don't know that he actually means to do a deal, certainly not one that entails unleashing Cthulhu--"

"How do we know that?"

"He was frightened Cthulhu could reach him on Destran; he's not going to put himself in undue danger right on Cthulhu's doorstep. No, he must believe he can obtain what he desires without being obligated."

"Then he's a fool."

"Overconfident, more likely. He may believe that were he able to gain enough knowledge and power, quickly, that he could control Cthulhu."

"That seems unlikely."

"It does."

The look Tegan and Turlough traded now was uneasy. It was clear they weren't any too keen on this whole business, and the Doctor could understand that--although their lack of faith wasn't encouraging. It wasn't as if they'd never found themselves in these sort of circumstances before.

"If Alhazred's going to be out of his depths," said Travis, "where does that leave us?"

Why did everyone insist on being pessimistic? the Doctor wondered. "If we were to attempt anything large scale," he said, "we probably would be taking on more than we could handle. I can't say I much like the idea of leaving things as they are," he didn't like it one little bit, as a matter of fact, "but if we can just keep Alhazred from doing whatever he came for, that should be sufficient."

Travis sighed, stretched. "You could be right."

"You could sound a little more enthusiastic."

Travis grinned. "I could, but--" Some uproar from outside erupted just then, and his chair banged down as he ran for the exit, cursing as he crashed into various obstacles. The Doctor, Tegan, and Turlough were right behind him, the Time Lord tightly holding onto The Necronomicon.

Alhazred was struggling furiously, with Anna and Danny hanging onto him while Kimri and Garin picked themselves up off the ground. When Alhazred saw Travis and the Doctor he came up with an extra burst of energy, flinging Anna off him and whacking Rafferty hard across the face. Then he was sprinting for freedom, but he wasn't quite fast enough this time. Travis was well rested now, and was carrying a grudge to boot.

One hand fastened into Alhazred's cloak, pulling him up sharply. Alhazred wriggled, hitting out at the other man. Travis blocked the blow, releasing his grip on the cloak and delivering a sharp punch to Alhazred's stomach. The Necromancer gasped, doubled up, the wind knocked out of him. Travis shoved him back against a tree, holding him upright. He had his fist drawn back to smash into Alhazred's face--

"Travis."

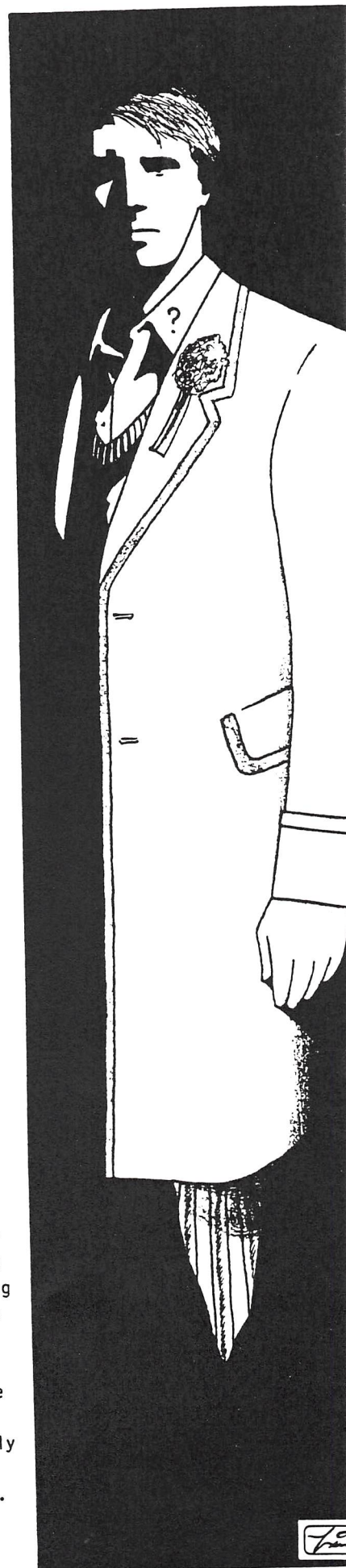
--and he stopped the blow, just barely, his muscles tensed and trembling. He stayed that way for long seconds, then, "Yes, Doctor, I know it wouldn't solve anything, but it'd make me feel a lot better." His arm dropped, and he stepped back, Alhazred slumping back against the tree.

The Doctor relaxed. He understood Travis' anger--felt more than a twinge or two of it himself, especially when he thought of how the necromancer had used him to get to Paanmaatsaan. Indulging in a spot of wizard-bashing might be satisfying on some primal level, but it wouldn't achieve much else. He was glad that Travis saw that, too.

Travis grasped Alhazred by the arm, hauling him back to where the others waited, having pulled themselves together with no real damage done. Although the look Anna turned on the wizard had a slightly glint to it, the Doctor thought. Travis shoved Alhazred down on a bench, and everyone clustered around, effectively blocking any further mischief from the Necromancer.

"Suddenly discover you had some overdue books lying about?" said the Doctor.

Alhazred glared at him. "You are interfering in--"



"--in things we don't understand. Yes, you keep saying that."
"And you keep interfering."
The Doctor grinned. "Hopeless busybody, I know." He held The Necronomicon so that Alhazred could get a good look at it in the moonlight. "Don't suppose this is what you were after?"
Alhazred's eyes widened, and he made a snatch for the book. Travis pushed him back down, and became the recipient of the Necromancer's baleful gaze.
"That lore can be of no use to you," Alhazred said.
"And what use is it to you?" said Travis.
"None of this concerns you!"
"There's where you're wrong. Pamela told me everything."
Alhazred returned his look unflinching. "What happened to her companions was unfortunate."
"Unfortunate? That's what you call the deaths of six people?"
The Doctor thought he'd better intervene, hearing that little rumble of menace back in Travis' voice. "From what Dr. Travis has told me," he said, "with all their power, the Paanmaats couldn't control Cthulhu. What makes you think you have any sort of chance?"
"Ah, but the Paanmaats sought to take from Cthulhu. I only seek to acquire knowledge."
Despite himself, Travis' curiosity was piqued. "What do you mean that the Paanmaats tried to take from Cthulhu? That they tried to depose him, and there was a power struggle?"
"There was, and you know who lost. This is Cthulhu's domain, and though he sleeps he rules. The Paanmaats sought to wrest it from him and were destroyed."

"How?"
"You saw the ruins. That was not done in thousands of years of neglect, but in one hour, when Cthulhu reached through the portal and rained destruction upon the Paanmaats. Dig long enough, Dr. Travis," and Alhazred smiled, "and you might find some bones. Cthulhu consumed the rest."
Well, that was one mystery solved, the Doctor thought. "When you say consumed--"
"I mean he devours: body, mind and soul. Stripping all away, leaving only skeletal remains, if that. Did Dr. Drury tell you that?" This last was directed at Travis.
Who said, very softly, "You insane bastard," and started towards him--but Kimri and Rafferty intercepted him, drawing him off.
The Doctor's troubled gaze stayed on Travis, but he spoke to the Necromancer, "Where do we go to cross back to Paanmaatsaan?" The sooner they got out of here, the better for everybody.
The smile that claimed Alhazred's face was mixed of appreciation, delight, and malice. "Oh, Doctor, you should have asked the crystal that. There's only one way back--from Cthulhu's temple."
Yes, of course. He should have known. "You're like a cat, aren't you? Always landing on your feet."
And Alhazred smiled like the one that ate the canary.
The Doctor looked over at Travis, who still looked like he wanted a piece of the wizard. "Travis?"
"Let's go."
The Doctor nodded, gestured for Alhazred to get to his feet. "Lead the way."

On the maps it had looked like a fairly short hike from Arkham to the cove, and while it wasn't far in actual distance covered, the land itself made for some rough going. Though the moon was full, its light had to filter through a tangle of tree limbs that formed a canopy overhead. The Doctor used the flashlight, but that illumination was of scant help with undergrowth that choked the path, and piles of fallen leaves that announced their presence every time they stepped into them. Along with the sound of crackling leaves, there was the soft background chitter of insects, the scrabbling scurry of small animals, the sudden screech of an owl as it spotted its prey. And all the while the sound and scent of the sea grew more pronounced.
Alhazred moved along swiftly, heedless of whatever might be in his way, and several times he stumbled and fell. He seemed to be very sure of where he was going, and becoming increasingly anxious. The Doctor noticed that Garin and Kimri were uneasy as well, attuned to something in the air. There was something unnerving about these blackened woods, a disturbance he couldn't pin down, though it tickled persistently at the back of his mind.

Travis had picked up on it, too, for he leaned in to whisper, "Why's Alhazred act like he expects to be snatched away by something?"

"Maybe because he knows he could be." The Doctor didn't think Travis would object to that.

"Keep quiet," Alhazred hissed at them. He had stopped, and was peering around with increasing agitation. "They're here."

"Who is?"

"His servants, you fool."

"He's right," said Kimri.

"How do you know?" the Doctor said.

Garin and Kimri exchanged looks, and Garin said, "We know."

"Can you tell how many?" Travis asked.

The pair concentrated, shook their heads. "We can't be that specific," said Kimri. "Just...several."

"Oh, wonderful odds," Rafferty muttered. "Eight to several."

"I thought you could handle anything," was Tegan's wry comment.

"Shh." Anna moved up to Travis. "What do you want to do?"

"No choice. We go on. Right, Doctor?"

"Right." The Doctor tapped Alhazred's shoulder. "Come on."

"I cannot guarantee our safety," Alhazred said, remaining rooted. "I must have my equipment."

Travis gave him a firm shove forward. "Move."

The glare the wizard turned on him was composed of fury and fear, but he resumed his role of guide.

Before too much longer the woods began to thin out, and it ought to have been a little comfort to have the moonlight gleaming down now. Except that by now they all could hear what moved through the woods with them, always just out of sight, nothing to be glimpsed but for a shadow, when anyone turned to look. Just the rustle of leaves as something lurched along, a low and croaking whisper.

The Doctor and Travis had to practically drag Alhazred along now, following the sound of the ocean. Soon they found themselves completely out in the open, near cliffs that jutted out over the water, the crash of breakers loud and sending salt spray into the air.

"Where to now?" Travis asked Alhazred, refusing to be rattled.

The Necromancer cast a harried glance at him. "What?"

"How do we get to the causeway?"

"Ah..." Alhazred wet his lips, obviously wanting only to bolt and run. "Down there, on the beach...there's a path," he pointed in a random direction. "It's time," he whispered, looking skyward at the moon and stars.

"For the rising?" said the Doctor.

The Necromancer nodded, clutching Travis' sleeve. "I am not ready."

Travis looked over at the Doctor who was uneasy himself at having to depend on this unreliable occultist. It was a wonder, the way he carried on, that he'd survived his first visit here, much less been in such a tizzy to get back. Well, there was no way to reckon with an obsessive.

"You must take us to the temple," he said to the wizard, "none of us can stay here."

"The temple?" Alhazred looked at him as if he'd never seen any of them before, as if something else was tugging at him.

"Will we know the gateway when we see it? Is it like the one on Paanmaatsaan?" The Doctor shook the man, trying to get his attention.

Alhazred blinked. "Yes, I can take you there."

And that was a prospect which clearly thrilled him all to pieces.

"Well then, let's go," the Doctor said, taking Alhazred's arm to tug him along.

But Alhazred was back to playing statue, and wouldn't be budged. "He knows we're coming. They've already told him."

"So we're automatically doomed?" Travis shook his head. "You want to stay here, fine. If something comes and gobbles you up it'll be doing everybody a favor." Then he turned, walking towards the cliff edge, looking for the path down to the beach.

The Doctor looked at Alhazred, shrugged, and followed Travis and his crew.

The water down there was boiling and frothing, waves pounding at rocky shoreline. There was a strip of beach visible, reached by a steep path worn into the cliffside. The causeway was barely visible, just a ridge of rock jutting out of the swirling water.

Travis looked at the Doctor.

"If he's right," said the Time Lord, "we don't have long to wait."

Even as he spoke, the ground shook, and they hastily stepped back from the edge. Alhazred, who still hadn't moved, was gazing raptly out to sea, and the rest of them followed his gaze, not really sure what to

expect as the ground trembled again, more violently. The wind grew steadily stronger, whipping at clothes and hair, forcing them to hold onto each other as some of the gusts threatened to sweep them off the cliff.

The croaking whisper that had pursued them from Arkham started up again, barely audible over the wind and rumbling earth. Looking around, the Doctor and the others saw a score of the Deep Ones come creeping--lurching, hopping--from the woods, many of them dragging along residents of Arkham, drugged or under some spell of compulsion, for they didn't struggle with their captors. Travis and his crew had their weapons out, but it was impossible to get off a shot at the Deep Ones without harming one of the humans. The Deep Ones' croaking was rising to a fever pitch as they moved ever closer to the cliff edge, oblivious to the presence of the Doctor and the others. At their approach though, Alhazred finally came unstuck, scurrying over to relative safety. He clutched at the Doctor and Travis, trembling, looking from the frothing water to the Deep Ones, who now shed their garments, revealing warty, greenish-brown skin, webbed feet and hands, features that were a nightmare blend of human and amphibian.

Then the Deep Ones began plunging over the cliffs with their captives, striking out to sea.

Almost at the same moment, a funnel of water went spurting into the air as the ground heaved and groaned, and amid an angry froth of water something burst from the ocean depths, pushing ever upward as water sluiced down its slopes.

So abruptly that it hardly registered, everything went still and quiet. And in that quiet, they could see what had been thrust from its watery hold.

Water continued to pour off it, from the topmost spires, down the mossy slopes. Seaweed clung to and smothered everything. It was difficult to tell where the temple began, and the time-worn black rock ended; it might have been carved right from the stone. Triple spires topped it off, rising from a rectangular slab which protruded from the rockface, overhanging tall, double doors that slowly began to open, throwing a wedge of light before them.

The first wave of Deep Ones began clambering ashore, slithering up the mossy, muddy slope with their captives. The Deep Ones scrambled over rocks and each other in their eagerness to reach the temple.

The Doctor found he'd been holding his breath, and promptly resumed breathing, tearing his gaze from the island, turning to Alhazred--

--who came out of his trance all at once and bolted, running for the path down to the beach. Garin and Turlough made a grab for him; Turlough got a handful of the wizard's cloak, but let go when Alhazred threatened to drag him along as the Necromancer practically hurtled down the path. He landed--crashed--all in a heap, but was rolling to his feet at once, splashing through the water out to the causeway, charging along it unmindful that one misstep would send him plunging into the ocean. As the Doctor and the others watched, Alhazred scrambled onto the island in the wake of the Deep Ones; tripping, crawling, throwing himself towards those gaping doors. There was nothing any of them could do but watch his progress--and then their attention was caught by something that began to fill the doorway, moving further out until it stood fully revealed.

So tall it had to duck its head just a bit to get through the door, and that scaled head contained two yellow eyes that blazed with malevolent arrogance. Where there should have been a face, there was instead a mass of writhing tentacles. Bat-like wings flared out from the shoulders. The arms ended in taloned hands; a match for the feet which dug into the moist earth. A long tail lashed from side to side.

In a barely audible whisper, Travis said, "Doctor, is that--"

"Yes, that is Cthulhu, High Priest of the Elder Gods." And it looked every inch of that, the Doctor thought. There hadn't been many times in his lives when he had felt daunted, but this was one of them. Cthulhu exuded power: evil, twisted, corrupting, but absolute.

As the Doctor wondered how to face Cthulhu, how to make the most of his meagre resources, Alhazred came to a halt before the Elder God, trembling and gasping, a suddenly forlorn and vulnerable figure. The great head tilted to look at the Necromancer, then one of the taloned hands extended towards him and a mist substance oozed from the fingertips, drifting over and enveloping Alhazred. One terrible shriek was torn from the Necromancer as the vapor absorbed him. When it cleared, seeping back into Cthulhu, there was nothing left but gleaming white bones that collapsed in a heap, covered by the black cloak.

Cthulhu moved, one foot crushing the bones, looking out towards the rest of them clustered on the cliff. It flung its other hand at them, fire bursting forth, searing towards them as they threw themselves to the ground, fire raining down all around them. Cthulhu's laughter rumbled and reverberated all about them, and when they finally looked up, the Elder God had vanished back into the depths of his temple, the doors clanging shut.

* * * * *

It was a greatly subdued group who made their way down the path, slipping and sliding, hardly a word passing among them as they splashed through the cold water over to the causeway, carefully picking their way across the slick, seaweed-strewn rock. Isolated with their own thoughts, they made it to the island, climbing the muddy slopes to stand before those massive doors--and trying not to look at the small pile of bones and cloth.

Travis couldn't help looking, though, and turned a troubled gaze on the Doctor. "Why do I feel responsible?"

"For the same reason I do, I expect," the Doctor said. The man had been a maniac, possibly a very dangerous one, but all the same..."Is the key there?"

Travis looked at him, surprised, then down at the bones. Grimacing, he knelt and gingerly went through them. Handling remains like this was hardly a new experience, except that he hadn't known any of those other skeletal remains he'd disturbed. His fingers encountered something cold, hard and metallic, and he came up with the key.

He shook his head. "Stupid thing to die for." He shook himself, as though trying to cast off this mood, and went over to the doors, put a hand against them and gave an unproductive shove. "Danny, Garin, give this a look."

Rafferty paused long enough to drape his jacket over Tegan's shoulders, then joined Garin in examining the doors while everyone waited and shivered, from the damp cold and reaction/anticipation. No one was particularly eager to see Cthulhu again.

Except for the Doctor, who knew they would have to face Cthulhu again if they were going to get back to their universe. That they had not been seen as an immediate or dangerous threat was obvious, and the Doctor wasn't sure if he felt insulted or relieved by that. The latter, he decided, since that could mean Cthulhu's guard might be somewhat lowered.

Now if they could just get inside.

He went over to Garin and Rafferty. "How's it going?"

"Not good," Rafferty said, sitting back on his heels. "The lock's up there," he pointed to a spot about twelve feet up; it would be roughly chest height to Cthulhu. "And it's keyed electronically. Now, if I had my equipment I'm pretty sure I could override the locking mechanism, but--"

"But your equipment is back on Paanmaatsaan."

"Yeah." Rafferty held up his pocket-case of picks and probes. "These just aren't up to the job."

The Doctor sighed, ran a hand through his blond hair. There had to be a solution, he refused to be halted this close..."Travis! Give me the key."

Travis hesitated. "Doctor, we can't afford to mess around with it. It could be our only way out of here."

"Which will be of no use to us if we can't get past these doors."

There was that. "All right," Travis said, and handed it over.

"Thank you."

The Doctor and Rafferty gave the key a thorough once over, then took another look at the lock, with Garin balancing the Time Lord on his shoulders. Everyone else politely waited for an explanation, but the pair were much too busy to bother telling anyone what they were trying to do.

To Travis' objection, the Doctor began fiddling with the key, using one of Rafferty's probes--saying it reminded him a little of something he called a sonic screwdriver. The Doctor understood Travis' worry, but anything taken apart could be put together again. As this door was electronically operated, and the only piece of sophisticated hardware in their possession was the key...Well, he and Rafferty thought it would prove possible to adapt the key for opening a different sort of door.

And they were getting down to badly limited options.

He'd just about finished up, when the ground moved.

"What was that?" Turlough said. Even his usual aplomb had been ruffled by all this. Well, maybe the whole situation would prove to be a positive learning experience for Master Turlough, the Doctor thought.

And the ground trembled more violently, shifting under their feet.

"Doctor," said Travis, "I think the island's getting ready to submerge."

"I think you're right. Garin, will you boost Rafferty please? I think we're ready."

Garin looked over at Travis, who shrugged and said, "May as well humor them; I think we're out of choices."

The young thief nodded and braced himself against the door.

Rafferty took the modified key from the Doctor. "Fingers crossed, everybody," he said, putting his foot

into Garin's cupped hands and clambering onto the other man's shoulders. With Garin braced, Rafferty stretched precariously on tiptoe to apply the key.

Looking on the Doctor held his breath, hoping they'd got it right--and felt his hearts start beating again as the doors shuddered, and with a protesting groan began to open. Garin nearly lost his footing as the ground shook again, and nearly sent Rafferty tumbling. As it was, the key was dislodged and the doors began to close.

"Quickly!" The Doctor urged everyone through, as the lower part of the island was already under water, and the frothing sea surging nearer all the time.

Rafferty jumped clear of Garin, was steadied on his feet by him, and shoved through the narrow opening, the others crowding behind and being pulled through by the Doctor and Travis. They just made it when a wave crashed against the closed doors.

Tegan let out a deep breath. "Never a dull moment, eh?" she remarked to Rafferty. "Typical?"

"Oh yeah," he grinned. "Risk life and limb, on somebody's whim, and never a word of thanks."

Travis smiled. "We're all beside ourselves with gratitude."

"Sure. That's the sort of thing you'd say when we're about to meet our doom."

Tegan grinned, falling into step with Rafferty, ignoring the Doctor's annoyed look. The scruffy thief seemed to be going over rather well with her, though the Doctor couldn't see the appeal.

"I wouldn't worry about it, Doctor," Travis said.

"About what?"

"Danny and your Tegan."

The Doctor's expression was a bit indignant. "She's not 'my' Tegan, and I've no idea what you're talking about?"

"I see. Don't you think that could be the problem?"

The Doctor was about to reply to that ridiculous statement, when Kimri said, "Do you hear that?"

They had been walking along a hallway of gleaming black stone that seemed to absorb the light. No elaborately ornate features; just cold sterility. The stone had seemed to be soaking up sound as well, but now that Kimri called their attention to it, they could hear a low, throaty chanting coming from somewhere ahead.

"What is it?" Tegan said.

"Let's find out," the Doctor said. But no one budged. Well, he hadn't expected overwhelming support, but he was a little appalled at the way they all stood there. "Look, it could have something to do with all those people. If there is anything at all that we can do to help them we have to seize the opportunity. We could easily be in the same boat." If an appeal to altruism wouldn't get them in gear, perhaps he could strike a self-centered chord.

"He's right," Tegan said, grasping Rafferty by the arm and tugging him along. "We have to help."

Looking a bit guilty, Travis also joined the Doctor, waving the rest of his crew forward. "What do we do?"

"Just come on," the Doctor said, looking at Turlough, who hung back, holding The Necronomicon. "Coming?"

"You shouldn't have followed me, Doctor," he said, which seemed rather irrelevant at this point, but the Doctor knew what he meant.

"I didn't have a choice."

"No. I should have realized you wouldn't."

The Doctor smiled, patted him on the shoulder. "We'll talk about it later."

Turlough came up with a wry smile. "How can you be so certain there will be a later?"

"A little positive thinking never hurts. Come on."

The corridor led to stairs, and as they climbed ever higher the raspy chanting grew louder, acquiring a hypnotic rhythm that made it hard to concentrate on anything else. The Doctor kept after everyone, trying to keep them distracted.

Anna, hands pressed to her ears, said, "I feel like I want to run to it."

"We all do," Travis said. "Is this what happened with Alhazred?"

"Something very like," said the Doctor. "Cthulhu particularly wanted him, I think. Now Cthulhu just needs power, energy."

Tegan looked at him. "That's what those people are for? To be...consumed?"

"I think so. Come on," he said, urging them to keep moving.

The end of the line proved to be a gallery, and looking down into the heart of the temple they saw Cthulhu standing at an altar, very like the one on Paanmaatsaan, the wall behind shimmering and rippling. Fifteen people were arrayed before the altar, hemmed in by the Deep Ones, who kept up their rhythmic incantations in a state of near ecstasy. Cthulhu, too, seemed enthralled, caught in the moment, the taloned right hand extending. The fingers flexed slightly, and the corrosive mist began seeping out, drifting towards the sacrifices.

The Doctor pulled his attention away from that, grabbing The Necronomicon from Turlough, and frantically thumbed through the pages. Two people were already enveloped in the mist, their screams echoing through the chamber as Cthulhu drew their essence into itself. The Time Lord found the incantation he wanted, and began chanting it, making his voice carry as strongly as possible--and feeling a pang of regret for the compelling baritone of his previous incarnation. But his tenor did penetrate the chanting, the screams--and the mist halted, swirling, then rushing back at Cthulhu, who simply absorbed it before turning a furious countenance upon the Doctor.

The Time Lord stood fast under that baleful look, nor did he flinch as the left hand was lifted and searing flame spurted towards him. Dodging and ducking, he recited another incantation, and the sizzling flame fizzled. Cthulhu's roar shook the chamber, and the Elder God began to come down from the altar.

"Let's go," the Doctor said, urging the others to the steps that led down into the temple. "We've got to get to the wall."

The eight of them raced down the steps, dashing across to the far wall, Deep Ones clutching at them, Cthulhu's talons raking the air. They tried to bring some of the others with them, but in the confusion the people had panicked and scattered, and Cthulhu was literally breathing down everybody's neck.

There just wasn't time to save anyone, the Doctor knew, as he scanned the console top of the altar, snatched the key from Rafferty, fit it into place, and leapt forward with the others as the wall dissolved completely and filled with the pinkish-gray mist.

As before, there was a brief sensation of disorientation, and then they were back, safe and sound, in the Paanmaat temple.

But they couldn't rest there. The crystal computer began pulsing, glowing more brightly than ever, all of its facets showing the same thing: Cthulhu bursting into the temple. And even now they could see a form taking shape in the mist.

Snatching up the crystal, they all found another burst of energy that spurred them through the temple doors, plunging out into the ruins and bright sunlight, even as Cthulhu came out of the mist, lunging at them. The Elder God couldn't get its mass through the door, however, and instead became intent on tearing the temple down around itself.

Again the Doctor turned to The Necronomicon. Over and over he spoke the incantation, and as he spoke the sky grew dark with angry-looking clouds that rumbled thunder. A fierce wind began to blow over the plain, forcing them all to hang onto each other in what shelter they could find. Strange lights glowed among the clouds, and lightning began to sizzle and crack, striking the temple repeatedly. Cthulhu's angry roar seemed to shake the very ground as he flung fire at the lights--only to be struck again and again by blazing forks of lightning. Cthulhu howled, his flesh smoldering. Bolt after bolt hit him and the temple, and the temple burst in a shower of stone and flame.

The force of the blast hit the Doctor and the others, picking them up and flinging them off in all directions.

And everything was still.

* * * * *

Moaning, the Doctor stirred, feeling as though he'd been trampled by a herd of elephants. Maybe two herds. Very gingerly, he tried sitting up, and when that brought on nothing too calamitous, he got to his feet. He'd been unconscious a long time. It was dusk now, the triple moons faintly glimmering. The sky was clear again, no sight of those lights. Nor of Cthulhu. And where the Paanmaat temple had been, now there was only a pile of smoking rubble.

He didn't see Tegan or Turlough, or any of Travis' people, and decided he'd better get busy hunting up everybody.

He was making his way through the ruins when he was hit with a sudden sense of déjà vu: this was the scene he had been shown in that crystal. Even as that thought passed through his mind, there was a scuffling sound behind him, and he turned to find Turlough there, gun in hand.

For endless seconds they remained frozen in that tableau, then Turlough, relaxed, smiled, and said, "I think this belongs to one of Travis' people. Have you found anyone?"

The Doctor returned the smile, accepted the gun as it was handed over. "Not yet. Let's keep looking."

Yes, everything was going to be all right.

* * * * *

Travis had listened to the Doctor's explanation of what had happened, how the Time Lord believed he had summoned forth the Ancient Ones who had imprisoned Cthulhu in the first place. Travis still found it a little hard to swallow, yet could hardly deny that something pretty extraordinary had occurred. These last few hours had shown him that there were indeed more things in heaven and earth--and maybe Hell--than he'd ever dreamt of.

Right now, though, he was just being grateful that they had all survived. Well, except for Alhazred. He couldn't have said why he felt bad about the Necromancer's death--especially given his own pronounced hostility towards the man. But...no one deserved to die like that.

He supposed Pamela wouldn't be too troubled by Alhazred's death, and he could understand that. He wondered what she would do about her discovery of Paanmaatsaan. It was wholly her decision, of course, but he did rather hope she would decide it would be best if this planet remained lost.

"Well," he said, "I guess we may as well get going then." Not much point in hanging around here any longer now.

The Doctor nodded, hefting The Necronomicon, and taking a step towards the TARDIS. "It's been interesting." He held out his free hand.

Travis shook it. "That's not quite the word I'd have picked." He looked at the book. "Doctor, if Alhazred wrote that sometime in the future, how can it exist when he's dead now?"

The Doctor frowned. "Yes. Well. It was a paradox to start with, wasn't it?"

"In other words, you don't know?"

"Hmm," was all the Time Lord had to say to that. "Tegan, Turlough, time to go."

Turlough joined him at once, but Tegan was taking her time saying good-bye to Danny.

Travis smiled at the Doctor's irritated expression, though he was more interested in the book. "Do you think it would be valuable, the book?"

"Possibly."

"Umm. I don't suppose you'd consider--"

"No."

"Well, but--" Travis knew some bibliophiles who would pay dearly for something like this.

But the Doctor was adamant that the book was too full of potential mischief. "Cthulhu wasn't destroyed, remember, only sent back." And before Travis could frame a good argument for why he and his crew ought to have the book, Tegan had joined the Doctor.

The Time Lord smiled. "Well, we're off then."

"But, wait a minute, Doc--"

But the TARDIS doors had closed, and a couple of minutes later it had dematerialized.

"Well," said Rafferty, completely unbroken up about Tegan's departure, "that's not something you see every day."

"Daniel," said Kimri, "if that is the only thing about today which you find remarkable, we must have a long discussion."

"What I want to talk about," said Garin, "is what we're going to do now." He was looking challengingly at Travis, arms folded and shoulders thrown back to emphasize his bulk.

Travis smiled, unimpressed with the posturing. But he didn't blame Garin for finding this turn of events somewhat unsatisfactory. He had accomplished what he'd promised Pamela, more or less, but the others didn't have a lot to show for this caper. Of course he knew they'd hung in there with him for reasons that went beyond profit, but it would be nice to reward their loyalty.

He looked at the perkily glowing crystal computer. "Maybe this thing would fetch us a few credits. It's certainly unique." If he didn't know better, he'd have sworn the crystal reacted to that; certainly it seemed to darken a bit.

Anna snatched it up, cradling it protectively. "Not on your life, Travis."

"Anna--"

"No."

He sighed. These people were getting completely out of hand.

Kimri leaned close to whisper "Matadari" in his ear.
"Huh?" Oh! "Garin, what did you say was the name of that art collector on Matadari?"
The young thief looked surprised, then pleased, and unfolded. "You mean it?"
"Tell me about it," Travis said, heading for the Recovery. It wouldn't hurt to listen, and they didn't have anything else on at the moment.
Besides, it was a long time since they'd done an art show.

* * * * *

"So where're we off to now?" Tegan was asking as the Doctor fussed with the TARDIS controls.
"Earth, 1920's, Providence, Rhode Island."
"Rhode Island? What on earth could be there that you'd be interested in?"
"Not what, who. I think Howard will find this book most interesting." Satisfied, the Doctor stepped back from the console. "Any regrets?"
"About what?"
"Well, you seemed to be hitting it off rather well with certain of Travis' people."
"I don't know what you think you're talking about, Doctor."
"Well, it looked to me as if you were..."
Turlough left them to hash it out.
It still amazed him that, knowing what might happen, the Doctor had still come after him. Pleased him, too, and he was certainly glad things hadn't turned out as predicted.
And he was still free of the Black Guardian. As he wasn't in any real hurry to get back to Trion, maybe it wouldn't be so bad to stay here for awhile, make use of the learning experience.
In his room, he was taking off his jacket when he felt something hard in one of the pockets. With a sinking sensation, he reached in to draw out the object, staring in numb horror at the cube through which the Black Guardian communicated with him.

And it glowed.

[the author wishes to apologize to fans of H.P. Lovecraft for playing somewhat fast and loose with the Cthulhu Mythos which he created]

We

We have always known each other
yet we don't.

We have been close
yet have never shared a dream.

We once had a chance
but now it's gone.

We once had something
but it turned out to be nothing.

We once shared a laugh
yet you don't even smile anymore.

We will always be friends, you said
but will we, can we?

Kandi

Wrath of a Redhead

Mary Morris

The tall man raced down the street, breathing hard. He should never have ventured into the shopping district, he knew now - for all the good that would do him. **She** had spotted him, and had immediately given chase. Not that he didn't mind being chased by a pretty woman; however, he knew by experience that this one had murder on her mind. Long, slow murder, with lots of physical and mental anguish.

In the year since the movie had come out, his life had been Hell. In recent months she'd resorted to phone calls, nasty letters, threats, and threatened legal action. He was starting to cringe at the mere whisper of a Brooklyn accent.

Frantically, he glanced around. She wasn't in immediate sight, but that didn't mean anything. There had to be somewhere safe he could go, hide out until she gave up...

Pushing himself even harder, he ran west two blocks, into the third building on the left, up three floors, and started hammering desperately on the second door on the right.

"Danny! Let me in! LET ME IN! SHE'S AFTER ME!"

The door opened suddenly, and he fell into the room. Scrambling quickly to his feet, he quickly relocked the door and immediately glanced around for a large, heavy piece of furniture to push in front of it.

"I thought you were going to take care of this little problem." he accused his companion breathlessly.

The pudgy man shrugged. "I sent her two dozen roses. They came back shredded. I sent her a check. It came back shredded. I tried talking to her employers; they're on HER side." he moved to the window and glanced out at the street. "Looks clear - for now."

The other collapsed onto a sofa. "Unless she's coming up the fire escape. I don't understand - why doesn't she go bother Bill, or Ivan, or Annie? Why us?"

"**They** didn't write the script." His friend pointed out.

"You wrote it! All I did was revise!"

"But you're the one who thought that scene would be funny..."

"They signed a contract! How the Hell was I supposed to know she wouldn't like it - she liked the first movie!"

They paused as the sound of high heels echoed rapidly down the hallway outside, followed by an incredible pummeling on the door.

"AYKROYD! RAMIS! I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE! Just wait til I get my hands on you, you double dealing HACKS! I'll show you what the REAL Janine is like! Come on out and fight like men, you washed-up excuses for comedians..."

The two friends looked at each other with tired resignation.

"Do you want to call the cops, or should I?" Danny offered.

"Pity the poor cops. They've got enough to handle already - easy stuff like rapists, dope dealers, and street gangs."

Outside, the screaming continued. "...and I want you to know THE BLUES BROTHERS **STANK!** So did STRIPES!..."

Harold shrugged. "Can I use your phone? I need to call home and let them know I'm going to be late - by about a year."

It was going to be a long night, indeed.

"TONGUES"

by Kimberly Wigmore

Edmund Blackadder had decided that he could think of many places he'd rather be on this pleasant Sunday afternoon. Most definitely. A peaceful walk in the country, perhaps, or a day spend visiting old friends...but more likely six hours in the Pembrokeshire East, the most decadent fancy house in London, the man thought sullenly. He scowled and crossed his arms over his chest. As it was, he was in a bumpy coach, speeding across London to see the Queen. He shook his head long-sufferingly--that woman couldn't give honest folk a moment's peace.

By the time Edmund had reached the palace, he was in a wonderfully foul mood. This was not helped by the arrival of his friend (although this term was debatable) Lord Percy, and any semblance of civility was quickly destroyed at the sight of an extremely tall man striding purposefully towards him.

"There's something I want to discuss with you, you rotten little weasel--" growled the big man menacingly, stopping directly in front of Lord Blackadder. The dark-haired man held his ground--impressive, considering that he was a full head shorter than the man towering over him. The fact that his accuser was missing a great deal of his left arm did not make him any less threatening.

"You have something to say to me?" the black-clad man asked disdainfully.

"I know what you did to my wife while I was in jail, you son of a bitch--convincing her you were me and then trying to get her to--"

"I fail to see why it's my fault if your wife can't remember what you look like, Farrow," Edmund replied blandly. "Is she still having that problem? I'd be glad to come over and give her lessons in how to identify the various men in her life. If you think that would help, of course."

Lord Farrow looked as if he was about to explode; Percy (in his usual quick-thinking manner) interposed himself between them and cleared his throat. "What Lord Blackadder is trying to say, I think, is that the distress brought about by your incarceration and order of execution caused your lovely wife to become temporarily confused, which is why she was taken in by our clever little disguise...which was only used as a last resort when we couldn't locate you, you understand."

Edmund blinked. Percy was full of surprises these days. Then he sighed and shook his head. "Yes, Farrow, have you nothing better to do with your time? I should think that scrounging around the palace hoping to retain the Queen's favor was beyond even you--you should feel lucky to have been let off at all. I shouldn't want to upset her..."

The man somehow managed to match Blackadder's condescending tone. "I wouldn't worry myself about it if I were you, O Lord High Executioner--"

"Still mad about that too?" he said casually, examining his fingernails with studied disinterest. "You know, Farrow, I'd really like to stay out here and chat, but--" here he shrugged innocently, "I've got to go and see the Queen."

Percy had to hurry to catch up with the dark-haired man. Further down the entrance hall he caught him by the arm and halted. "Edmund, do you really think you should have antagonized Lord Farrow like that?" he asked worriedly. "I mean, who knows what he might do--"

"He won't do anything, Percy. He can't. Not while he's out of favor at court." Edmund glanced about. "Come on, then. I'd like to get this over with and still have some of the day left to myself."



"...now are you boys sure you understand?" asked Queen Elizabeth from her perch atop the raised throne. "Shall we go over it again? I can't tell you how important this is..." She glared imperiously at the small group of noblemen before her. "These guests who are coming to court--these very important guests actually," she emphasized, leaning forward towards them, "are emissaries from the Queen of Bohemia. If their visit goes favorably, their queen will agree to an alliance between our two states...and if it doesn't there'll be lots of heads on spikes decorating the castle so everyone BEHAVE YOURSELVES!" she shrieked. "So has anyone got any questions? Good. Their entourage should be arriving by the end of the week. Make them feel at home--or else," she warned.

"Or else what, poppet?" asked Nursie, who had been quietly sewing in her chair beside the queen during the meeting.

Queen Elizabeth made a face similar to that of a child forced to eat a plateful of spinach. "Or else something so nasty will happen to them that--"

"That I would have to wash your mouth out with soap, like when you were a little girl?" Nursie offered.

Pausing momentarily and then deciding it would be easier to agree with the addled old woman, Elizabeth nodded.

"And we can't have that, majesty," added Lord Melchett from her side.

"Now have you boys all got that?" She smiled. "If you think so, you can leave..."

Various subdued murmurings of "yes ma'am" were heard from the departing lords, trying to hurry out without appearing to hurry out. As they exited, they all looked either cowed or annoyed--all except Edmund Blackadder. This man wore a sly smile and had a rather sneaky glint in his eyes.

"Edmund?" Percy asked, somewhat worriedly. From past experience, he knew that this look usually meant trouble.

"I think, Percy," he mused philosophically, "that this little party just might be my ticket to easy street."

"Really?" Percy asked in confusion. "All the queen did was tell us to be polite to her guests at the party--"

"Do you know anything about the Bohemian people, Percy?"

"Well..." His brow knit for a few moments with the effort of thought. Finally he shook his head. "Not as such, no."

Blackadder smiled. "The Bohemians are fanatics on etiquette--proper manners in public and in particular polite and correct speech," he emphasized. "Especially in their own language. They consider it rude not to be met by at least one speaker of their godawful tongue in any international negotiations."

"But nobody in the court speaks Bohemian," continued Percy, spotting the one tiny flaw in Edmund's plan.

Blackadder's smile broadened. "Well, not yet, anyway."

"You?" Percy asked in disbelief. "Edmund, it is impossible to learn an entirely unfamiliar language in the space of a few days!" he protested.

"I don't mean to learn the entire language, Percy--just a few select bits of it."

"But...why do you want to do that?" he asked, still not understanding the rationale behind the other man's idea.

"Because, you idiot, if I impress these people well enough the queen will be very pleased with me." He paused. "Maybe even pleased enough to--"

"--marry you!" Percy finished happily. "Oh Edmund, you were right, it's a brilliant plan. But how are you going to learn any of their language without someone to teach you? It's not as if it were French, or something that lots of people know how to speak."

Edmund's eyes narrowed. "That's where you come in. What I want you to do is scour every bookshop in London for some kind of English-Bohemian dictionary...yes, I know that such a book will be rare, but you've got to try." He rubbed his chin. "Oh, and take Baldrick with you."

"Do you think he'll be able to help?"

"Baldrick? The man who certain primates in the jungles of Borneo consider to be a throwback?" Edmund shook his head. "No, I just want him out of the house," he continued briskly as they stepped into the open air outside the castle. "Do you think the two of you will be able to manage, or will you require further instructions consisting of words of one syllable or less?"

"Oh my lord, you do underestimate me sometimes," replied Percy as they stepped into the waiting coach. "Honestly, what could go wrong with such a simple request...?"

As if in answer, sinister laughter now emerged from the shadows near where the two men had been talking.

* * * * *

Several hours later, a triumphant Percy and Baldrick returned from their shopping expedition and presented Edmund with their prize: a rather dogeared manuscript that had obviously been the possession of another reader, if not an entire army of readers. He eyed it distastefully and held it by the corner. "You couldn't find anything else? Nothing...newer?"

"No, my lord, and we were lucky to find that," Baldrick assured him.

"But these could be hopelessly out of date," he replied, opening to the cover page (the words on the binding looked to have been worn away years before). "'Useful Phrases for the Tourist' by J. Russ, copyright--damn, I can't even make out the date." He frowned. "Are you sure this was the only copy?"

"The man who sold it to us said it was," Baldrick said blithely.

Blackadder sighed in resignation. "Well, it will have to do." He turned to address both of them. "For the next few days I shall be cloistered away with this book. Please do not disturb me while I'm working...do you know what will happen if you do?"

Baldrick and Percy did not in fact know, but quite wisely decided not to disturb him anyway.

* * * * *

The week soon passed and, to his credit, Edmund felt ready for any social situation that might present itself when meeting the delegation from Bohemia. He had studied the manuscript diligently, memorizing select words and phrases--he was prepared. He was confident. Nothing could possibly go wrong...

"...I am delighted to make your acquaintance, my lady," Edmund said, speaking to a middle-aged, amiable-looking duchess from the visiting party. He smiled winningly at her and continued in her native tongue. "[And please let me know of anything I can do to make your stay a more pleasant one.]"

"[You speak our language!]" the woman said in delight.

"[Oh, just a little, and not very well,]" he replied, attempting to appear modest. "[But one must learn if one wishes to truly experience all that life has to offer.]"

"That is a wise thing," she said, returning to thickly-accented English. "And I think it is good for us to practice these new things we learn... shall we practice each other's language while we are here, 'old boy'?"

"[Of course, ma'am.]" Noticing movement out of the corner of his eye, Edmund turned to see Percy waiting impatiently at his side. "Duchess Anna, allow me to introduce Lord Percy; Lord Percy, Duchess Anna of Bohemia." Switching back to her language, he continued, "[Percy is my companion--he is not intended as a tip.]"

"Why I did not think he would be, Lord Blackadder."

"I'll leave you two to get acquainted, shall I? I've still got to meet the rest of the delegation, but I'll get back to you later in the evening."

Duchess Anna smiled graciously. "I shall look forward to that time, my lord."

Edmund suavely kissed her extended hand and bowed. "[International amity demands that we make some physical display at this point, but I beg to be excused.]"

He did not see the strange look the duchess gave him as he walked away.

Soon Edmund had reached another small congregation of Bohemian delegates. They greeted him politely, having picked up on the fact that this man had made some effort to learn their beloved mother tongue, and Lord Blackadder was playing it to the hilt. (Showoff, Percy had thought unkindly as he passed the merrily chatting group.) Edmund thought back to the phrase the book listed as meaning "How large is your country? How many people live there?" He addressed one of the noblemen of the group. "[Is that you? Is that all of you?]"

"[I beg your pardon?]" asked the slightly confused man.

"[How many/much of you is there? There are more of you than previously--and you will undoubtedly be here tomorrow.]"

This earned him more confused looks. Hmmp, can't even answer a simple question, thought Edmund. And they've got the nerve to call us rude. He decided to press on anyway--maybe ask them something else. He



gestured towards the expensively-dressed woman standing beside the lord he'd been speaking with and repeated the phrase for "Is this your wife?", which for some reason came out as "[May I take this home with me?]"

"[What?!]"

"[My lady,]" he continued, ignoring the odd look on her husband's face, "[Are you edible? We English people, we are not edible.]" He glanced at the man. "[Your hair is false. Is your husband pregnant, or does he merely turn colors?]"

"[I've had enough of this,]" snapped the insulted Bohemian, taking Edmund firmly by the shoulder to expel him from the little circle.

Edmund, not knowing what was wrong, began to protest. "[Is this meant to be erotic?]" he asked indignantly. "[I find this erotic--]"

"[They always said that the English were perverts,]" muttered the lord.

"[Placing your finger there will yield little or no useful information!]" Blackadder said (although he thought he said something along the lines of "Get your hands off me.>"). "[If you do not stop that, I shall call the attendant--that is forbidden by my religion!]"

"[I think he's drunk, darling,]" suggested the woman. "[Be a dear and let him go--we don't want to cause any trouble.]" Her husband considered this for a few moments, then he relented and loosed his grip on the other man. "[Are you all right, Lord Blackadder? My husband just gets a little jealous sometimes...]"

Edmund straightened his clothing and regarded the man as if he were some particularly revolting specimen of vermin. His mind raced back to the section of the phrase book labeled 'Insults'. "[Your fingers are showing; how clean you are!]"

"Eh?"

"[You are clean, but animated,]" Edmund continued, shaking a finger at him and thinking he was delivering some devastatingly clever insult. "[That orifice was not reproductive in nature,]" he accused. Then, remembering that there was also a section listing compliments (and wishing to salvage what was left of the situation), he bowed to the lady and said, "[If you uncover your feet, I shall faint.]"

"[Oh dear...]" she murmured, shaking her head. "[That is very nice, Lord Blackadder, I think...]"

"[Think nothing of it,]" he responded, and then realized that it might be a good idea to take his leave of these people for a while...especially her husband, who seemed to lose his temper over the most innocent of questions! He was thankful to the lady, of course, and decided to tell her so. "[Although I am very flattered by your kind offer, my lady, I cannot accompany you to the mating pits, as I am viviparous.]"

Aghast, they watched him leave.

"How are you doing, Edmund?" Percy asked, wandering over to his friend. "Those two over there, I don't think they're feeling very well..."

"The husband's drunk," was his annoyed reply. "Off like a bucket of prawns in the sun...he went off the deep end completely, just because I asked a few simple questions. You'd think I'd propositioned his wife or something."

Percy frowned. "Did you?"

"Did I what?"

"Proposition his wife?"

"No, of course I didn't! Do you think I'd jeopardize my chance to get in good with the Queen by saying something as socially inept as that?" Edmund shook his head in disgust and peered over at one of the large tables laden with specially prepared Bohemian delicacies. "Never mind that for now--I'm starved. Is this foreign slop they're serving any good?"

"It's all right...do you think you should be saying that this loud?"

"Percy, if you haven't noticed by now, most of our visitors don't speak English. Even the ones that do aren't very good at it."

"Pity they couldn't find good, accurate phrase books like yours."

"Quite. Ah, here comes one of them now. Excuse me, Percy, but I've got some conversing to do..."

"Hello, Lord Blackadder," said Lord Kindya of Prague. "[I see you wish to sample some of our dishes. How do you find them?]"

"[Am I imagining this? Am I supposed to imagine this?]" asked the man in black, gesturing towards one of the platters. "[Waitress, this meal is still alive.]"

"[I beg your pardon?]"

"[My eating orifice is not at this end of my body,]" Edmund stated firmly.

"[What--]"

"[I cannot partake of this feast, as I do not eat lead; also, this cannot be my room because I do not breathe ammonia. Good sir, please do not let the atmosphere in/out, as I will be most uncomfortable.]"

By now, a small crowd of Bohemians had gathered round. Oblivious, Edmund continued what he thought was praise and kind words for their people and culture.

"[Oh, what a jolly fine natatorium/mating perch/arranged spectacle/involuntary phenomenon! At what hour does the lovelorn princess fling herself into the flaming volcano? May we participate?]"

"What is Blackadder saying over there?" Melchett asked Percy, watching the group of listeners grow steadily larger.

"I don't know, but it must be really good!" he enthused. "Way to go, Edmund!"

"[Could you deform yourself a little lower?]" he asked Lord Kindya. The man glared at him silently. Sensing the hostility, Edmund tried to make amends. "[My religious convictions prevent me from joining in your performance. I will be most comfortable between temperatures of 290 and 303 degrees Fahrenheit...would you care for the famous English delicacy of cheesecake and beer?]"

"[Could someone please get rid of this man?]" asked one of the delegates in exasperation, glancing about desperately for another person to foist this lunatic on.

"[Are you toxic? I am toxic,]" Lord Blackadder assured them.

"[Go away,]" warned Kindya, through clenched teeth. "[Otherwise I shall call the guards, and then your Queen Elizabeth will have you to blame when we inform the head of our delegation of your gross misconduct...]"

Edmund peered at the man in confusion, unable to follow any of the Bohemian's tirade. What the hell was he saying? He was obviously upset about something, that was clear; Edmund turned to the man's wife to see if she could explain what was going on. Unfortunately, his query to Lady Kindya came out as "[With me, sex is a lot like snow...you never know how many inches you'll get or how long it's going to last.]"

"[That does it!]" cried the Lord. "[GUARDS!]"

"[But what did I say?]" Edmund asked plaintively.

"Good Lord, what's going on over there?" gasped Percy, noticing the commotion. "Oh no, it's Edmund..."

"[But...but only I can satisfy your insatiable sexual desire!]" protested the flustered man to Lord Kindya, as the delegation's personal guards approached.

"[Throw him wherever the English guards throw their rubbish,]" yawned the Bohemian. "[The dungeon would be nice.]"

"[The Earth consulate will hear of this!]" Edmund promised as he was dragged from the room by two burly men in foreign garb. Struggling, he snarled, "[Kill me if you must, bad man, but you'll never rob me of my virtue!]"

"[English pigdog,]" muttered one of them.

Queen Elizabeth glared venomously towards the rapidly retreating nobleman, shutting her eyes tightly and clenching her dainty fists. Heads were going to roll, of that everyone was sure.

* * * * *

Lord Edmund Blackadder sat dejectedly on the bunk in his cell, idly scratching geometric designs in the floor's coating of dirt. He was in for it now, he knew. Something had gone tremendously wrong somehow...like it usually did, he thought suspiciously. Could it be possible that some higher power, far beyond the realm of mortals, was--for some reason--out to get him? He considered this probability for a moment, then shook his head. No, what a silly thing to think, he reassured himself...

Hearing footsteps coming down the hall, Edmund rose from the bunk and moved to stand by the iron bars. Silent, hands clasped behind his back, he made ready to do the honorable thing a man could: grovel at the queen's feet and beg for his life by claiming temporary insanity.

"Your majesty--" he began as soon as Queen Elizabeth was in sight, but he was cut off by the loud accusations of Lord Kindya of Prague. These accusations were mostly to do with insults to the Bohemian people as a whole and the delegation in particular, the propositioning of both his wife and himself (highly illegal in Bohemia), and the English monarch's involvement in it all (Lord Blackadder being her guest at the party, not theirs...), and through it all, the demand for his immediate execution by most of the delegation. At a short lull in the ranting (after Percy and Baldrick's unsuccessful efforts to speak on his behalf), Edmund glanced cautiously at the group. "I guess this means you're not going to let me go with just a stern warning, doesn't it..."

"Let him go?!" spat Kindya in outrage. "I'll see him drawn and quartered, boiled in oil, before--"

"No, Lord Kindya," said the Queen coldly. "We will not let him go..."

"Let him go!" echoed a female voice from the back of the crowd.

"Duchess Anna!" someone gasped.

"Now, what is it that you are doing to this poor boy?" asked the woman, pushing to the front of the group. "Why do you have him in your little jail?"

"He insulted our people, Duchess--made a mockery of our mother tongue," insisted one of the men.

"How did he do that?"

"You did not hear the things he was saying? We know their speech, yet he uses ours to provoke us!"

Duchess Anna regarded Edmund through the bars. "And how did you learn to speak Bohemian, 'eh'?"

Wordlessly (afraid of making yet another faux pas), he removed the battered manuscript from his pocket and handed it to her.

"Hmm," she murmured, examining the book and noting several of the phrases that had been underlined. "Do you know the phrase for 'I am happy to meet you; I hope you are enjoying your stay in this country'?"

"Yes ma'am, I do."

"Say it." Edmund did so, and saw the odd looks passing between the delegates. At his confused expression, the Duchess explained, "You have just said 'please direct me to the nearest sentient mammal'...it seems that when you purchased this you did not get your money's worth, sir--this is not Bohemian."

"It's not Bohemian?" he repeated incredulously. Then his eyes narrowed. "Percy..."

"But my lord, the man I bought it from swore that it was..."

"An' he looked like he knew what he was talkin' about, too," added Baldrick. "Especially since he worked for Lord Farrow--I figured that one of his servants would be pretty honest."

"That's who he was?" Percy gaped.

"You're trying to tell me that you bought this book from the man who has vowed terrible revenge on me, who would gladly see me dead, and who would gleefully dance the fandango on my grave?"

For the first time, Baldrick appeared to be considering that this might in fact have been the wrong thing to do. "Well, yeah," he replied sheepishly.

Fortunately for Baldrick, he was nowhere within reach of the cell's bars. The duchess gazed evenly at the man who appeared to be gauging the distance between the perimeter of the cell and his servant's neck. "It is not Lord Blackadder's fault, you see. As the leader of this delegation, I must insist that he is set free at once and that no harm should come to him."

"You would spare him his life from this...monstrosity?" Kindya replied in disbelief. "Why?"

"He was the innocent victim of an enemy's plot," the Duchess stated. "Also, seeing the looks on your faces when he said...some of the things he said..." she laughed merrily. "The entertainment was priceless, Lord Blackadder. I shall inform our government that an alliance with England would be favorable, and that your actions were instrumental in my decision...and I trust that something will be done about this Lord Farrow person?" she asked.

"I think high treason would be a fit charge, your majesty, for attempting to disrupt international negotiations," Melchett offered mildly.

"I knew I should have had him executed that first time," growled the red-haired monarch. "All right--issue a warrant for Farrow's arrest, torture, and death, and get Lord Blackadder out of that cell. Right now."

"But...which should we do first?" asked Baldrick.

This time he was within reach of the bars.

* * * * *

"...you know, Edmund, you are definitely one of the luckiest men I've ever met," mused Percy, eating breakfast with him the next morning. "You insult the entire Bohemian delegation--saying the most awful things possible, from what that Kindya bloke was inferring--and almost cause an international incident, and you manage to come out of it smelling like a rose! How do you do it?"

Edmund looked him the eye. "Clean living."

"No, seriously," Percy continued blithely. "This always happens to you, and you always wriggle out of it. Why is that?"

"I don't know," replied the man in black, with a mixture of philosophy and suspicion (heavily weighted towards suspicion). "You may think this insane, Percy, but sometimes I get the feeling that I'm put into this sort of situation on purpose, by forces totally beyond my control, just so they can watch and laugh at me. Do you ever feel that way?"

"Er...no," answered the other man. "I'm sure you're just imagining it, Edmund. You'll feel better tomorrow."

"Yes, I suppose so," he sighed. "It does sound rather far-fetched, when you think about it..."



When He Smiles

(to the tune "When He Shines" by Sheena Easton)

This man's a youth
once he was old
Searches for truth
with hearts quite bold
He's a Time Lord
from Gallifrey
A renegade champion
for the forces of the free

(Chorus)

But when he smiles
oh when he smiles
yes when he smiles
he smiles so bright

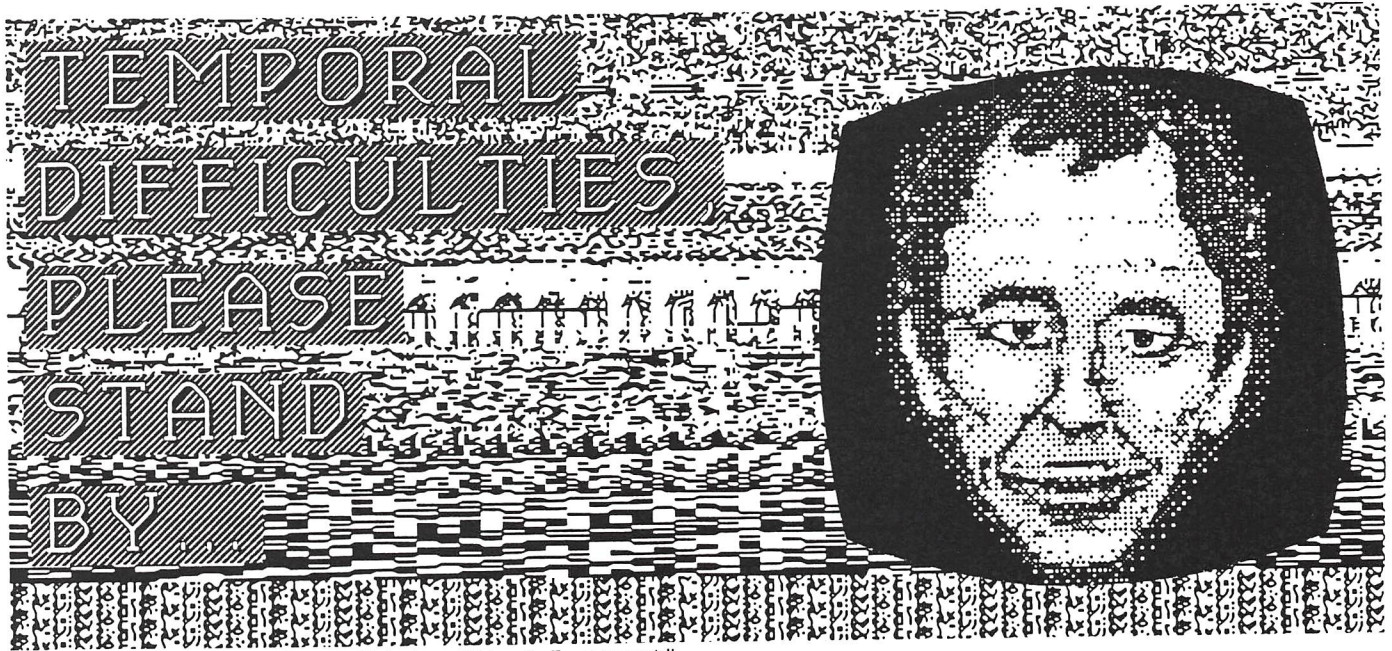
Once was a "tramp"
never a dude
He changes bodies by regenerating
when it strikes his mood
Once wore a scarf
and curly mop of hair
He's a brilliant scientist
that possesses great care

(Chorus)

He is compassionate
and is quite strong
He's somewhat child-like
and sometimes wrong

But when he smiles
oh when he smiles
yes when he smiles
he smiles so bright

Roxie Ray



It was Day Five of the "Lister Silent Treatment".

In five days, Dave Lister had not spoken a single word to his shipmate, Arnold Rimmer. In five days, Rimmer had snarled, taunted, pleaded, and generally done everything in his power to get some sort of oral acknowledgement from Lister...and failed utterly.

There were several reasons for this odd behavior. Firstly, Lister occasionally got utterly fed up with Rimmer's asinine opinions and view on life, the universe, and everything. Secondly, he would grow weary of trying to get Rimmer to see the truth of things--which started off with the assumption that Rimmer was an utter smeghead. Thirdly, Rimmer had recently offended him with several remarks over the state of their shared quarters, which rather made a garbage bin look like "House Beautiful".

Lastly, and most importantly, the silent treatment drove Rimmer absolutely bonkers.

There were few better motivations in Lister's book.

This is not to say that Lister wasn't speaking at all. "Holly," he called to the viewscreen. Several seconds passed--an unusually long interval in Lister's view--before the familiar, tired-looking face of the ship's computer floated into view.

"What's up, Dave?"

"Not much. Where's Rimmer?"

"Up at the command station, looking through the Captain's papers."

Lister shook his head, his dreadlocks flapping into his face. "Why's he doing that? He looking for his promotion papers?"

"Nah. He's looking for your file."

"What?" Lister sat up, suddenly interested. "Why's he doin' that, Hols?"

The computer frowned. "Dunno, Dave. Something about all those disciplinary demerits he was continually submitting. Perhaps he thinks he can put you under arrest or something?"

"Can he?"

"Maybe. Rule 3859.5858, subsection a states that a crewmember can be put under house arrest if enough demerits are accumulated. But I wouldn't worry much."

Lister jumped off his bunk and pulled on a grimy shirt. "Why's that?"

Holly smiled slightly. "Well, first off, I'd say the statute of limitations expired about three million years ago. Second, the captain never put any of those complaints in your file."

"He didn't?" Lister smiled slightly. "I guess he wasn't so bad after all."

"Nah. Considering if he hadn't put you in stasis for bringing that cat on board, you'd be dead and I'd be wandering through space talking to myself, I'd say he was all right."

"Yah." Lister rummaged through the refrigerator, selected a container of milk and a beer, and poured them into a mold-encrusted glass. "Say, where's Cat?"

"Corridor 549...oi, did I tell you about my latest discovery?"

Lister froze as he heard a familiar voice drawing closer. "Sorry, Hols, Rimmer's coming. Gotta go. Tell me later, when I can talk again." He rushed out of the room, leaving Holly with a slightly hurt look on his face.

"Oh well," the computer consoled himself, "it's not quite ready yet, anyway. Still a few bugs to work out."

"AAAAAAO00000WWWIEEEEEEEEEE!!!!"

The irresistible mating call of the Cat People echoed eerily through the darkened corridor, followed seconds later by the only other living entity on RED DWARF--and certainly the oddest one.

Bipedal humanoid in appearance, dark in skin tone, Cat could probably pass for human so long as he didn't open his mouth. The instant he did so, though, his long, sharp fangs would gleam piercingly. There were other physiological differences, of course, but nothing too obvious.

Behavioral differences--that was quite another thing entirely.

Cat rolled to a stop at a junction--the roller skates he'd found and claimed awhile back were perfect for mate-hunting-- and looked around. "Nothin'," he declared in disgust. "Man, I been all over this ship and there ain't nothin' to breed with." While Lister, Rimmer and Holly had quite patiently explained this detail to Cat several times over, the felinoid refused to surrender hope. "Well," he continued, "better check to see if it's my appearance that's scarin' 'em off."

A mirror appeared from one of the many pockets on Cat's immaculately tailored suit. He scanned himself quite thoroughly, making sure every hair, every crease was perfectly in place. "Damn, I'm good," he finally declared. "In fact, I'm so good, they probably figure I'll give 'em an inferiority complex!" He cackled cheerfully to himself, then slipped the mirror back into the pocket and looked around. "Well, which way?" he asked himself, gazing down the left passageway, then the right.

His ears perked up. There was some sort of noise down the left. Sounded like the ship was tearing itself up. "Okay. We go that way," he informed his shadow, pointing in the opposite direction.

His shadow stretched out towards the direction of the noise.

"Well...okay, we'll check it out," Cat decided, choosing to humor the obviously-stupid shadow. "But then it's down a few levels, so I can have my mid-day nap." He pushed off and rolled down the corridor, his howls and cacklings echoing eerily in the emptiness.

"So where are we, Professor?" Ace wrinkled her nose in disgust as she circled around cautiously. The air was slightly stale and more than a bit dusty, hinting that it had been some time since anyone'd ventured this way.

The Doctor smiled uncertainly and leaned against his umbrella. "Obviously, on a space ship of some sort, a freighter unless I'm mistaken." He abruptly sneezed, startling Ace, who had her baseball bat out of the backpack in record time. "Sorry," he apologized, wiping his nose with a kerchief.

"It's spooky," Ace complained, her voice bouncing off the darkness like radar. "Let's get out of here."

"I've already explained to you--several times--why that isn't possible," the Doctor replied, a hint of petulance in his tones. "We have to accept every opportunity we receive--otherwise...well, you know."

"Hiatus," the young girl nodded glumly.

"Exactly." The Doctor shook his head as unpleasant memories rose unbidden within his mind: the endless autograph sessions, the eternal question-and-answer periods, the searing agony of ferrets clawing up his leg..."At any rate, the sooner we find out why we're here, the faster we can be off...possibly into a better storyline. Let that be your comfort."

They turned to head down a corridor, when a wailing of unearthly origin drifted towards them. "Professor?" Ace asked, her voice filled with a trace of terror.

His eyes were tightly narrowed at the blanket of darkness from which the howling was coming. "Wait," he ordered quietly, lifting his broly into defensive position. "And no batting practice or Nitro-9 until we know what is causing that...that caterwauling."

And at that instant, Cat appeared, zooming into their view. Thinking quickly, he immediately adopted a "I'm big and mean" pose and rolled past the startled time travellers, their jaws falling to floor in disbelief. Seconds later, he'd vanished from sight, but both Ace and the Doctor remained rooted to the floor.

Finally the Doctor stirred into action. "Quickly, Ace!" he bellowed, shocking the girl from her trance. "Follow that felinoid!"



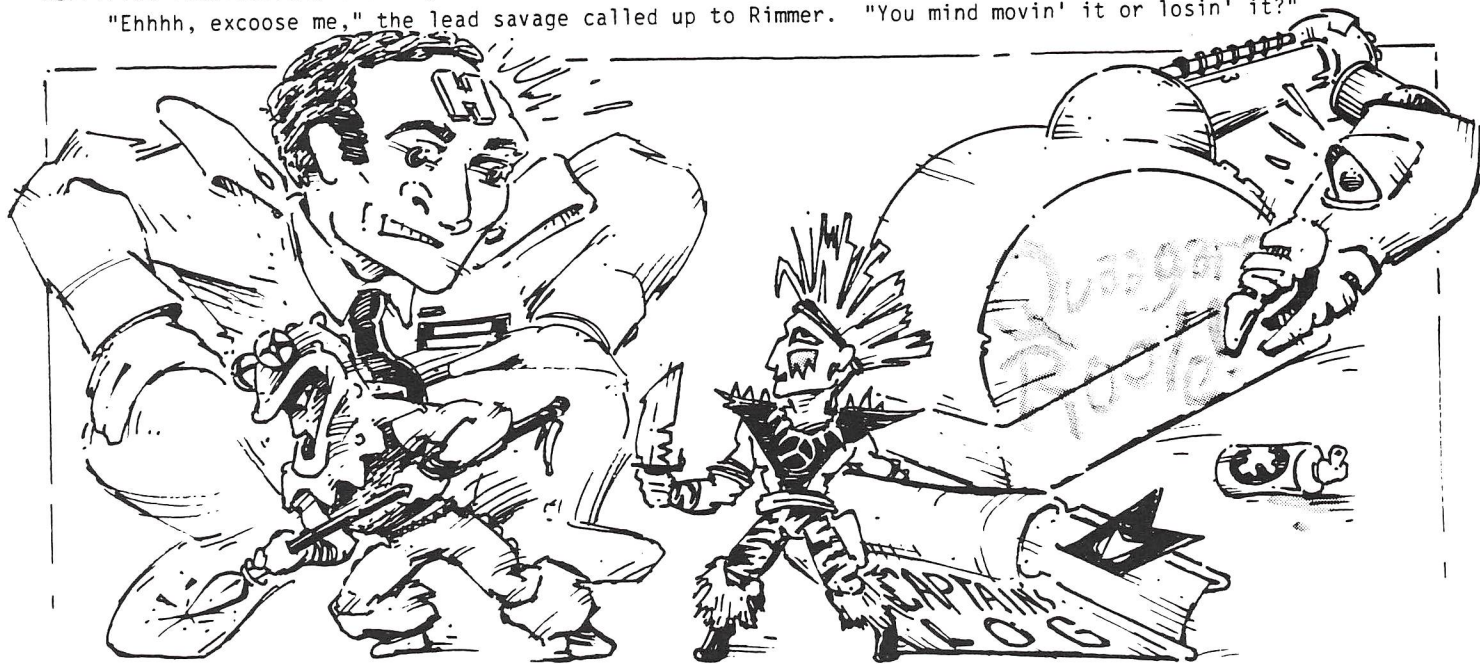
"No, no, no!" First Technician Arnold Rimer (dec.) screamed at the top of his nonexistent lungs. "I want you to turn one page, not fling the bloody log across the room!" The subject of his wrath, one of the scutters that did all the dirty work to keep RED DWARF going, winced slightly under the angry onslaught.

"Damn it all!" Rimmer continued to rant. "How am I supposed to put Rimmer on retroactive report if I can't even make sure the log books list his prior offenses?" Lost in thought, he began to pace back and forth, ignoring the various pieces of furniture that should have blocked his way but did not. Such was one of the decidedly few advantages of being a hologram.

He was busily debating the merits of simply faking the knowledge and hoping for the best when, from just beyond the corner of his eye, Rimmer spotted something...moving...across the floor. He whirled around to confirm his observation...and froze in astonishment.

It was the log book that was slowly scooting towards the door. Performing the operation, though, were two tiny figures garbed in "savage chic", resplendent in animal skins and war paint. As Rimmer watched in horrified fascination, the tiny intruders reached his foot and paused in their labors.

"Ehhhh, excoose me," the lead savage called up to Rimmer. "You mind movin' it or losin' it?"



"I...I...I..." Rimmer sputtered.

"Hey, get outta da way!" yelled the other one. "We're on a tight schedule here!"

Rimmer valiantly attempted to gain a cohesive grip upon the situation; he simulated taking a deep breath, exhaled, then screamed "WHAT IN THE HELL ARE YOU?"

The thieves glanced at each other and shrugged. "We're Quagaars," the one in the front replied.

"Fiercest warriors around, you betcha!" declared his companion.

"And the best collectors of old stuff around!" The lead Quagaar looked up at Rimmer with a sly grin.

"Hey, you wanna buy an old book? We just found one, could let it go at a reasonable price..."

"THAT'S MY BLOODY BOOK, YOU GIMBOIDS!"

"Eyyy, possession is nine tenths of the law! Now if you ain't buyin', get out of the way, okay?" To emphasize his point, the Quagaar shot a well-aimed kick at Rimmer's shoe...and promptly fell flat on his butt as his leg passed through. The tiny fellow stared in confusion at the shoe for a moment, then realization dawned. With a fierce battle cry, he picked up his battle spear and raced towards the obstacle in question.

Seconds later, he poured through the hologram. "Hey, Doofus--check it out! He ain't all there!" His spear slid in and out of the shoe for emphasis.

"Will you please stop that!" Rimmer demanded hotly. "I don't need to be reminded...hey! Come back here!" For he'd just noticed that the two Quagaars had picked the book up once more...and literally raced through his feet towards the door.

"So long, sucker!" the warrior bringing up the rear sneered as he ran around the corner.

Rimmer looked around wildly in impotent frustration, then spotted the scutter nearby. "Well, what are you waiting for!" he screamed. "GO GET THEM!" The scutter rumbled into gear, gliding smoothly towards the door--and passing through Rimmer as well. The harried hologram grit his teeth and hurried to follow.

"Quite," Rimmer beamed smugly, but something about the way the Time Lord had spoken made him cautious. He'd bear watching. The late First Technician scurried off to join the others down the corridor. Lister had said little during the exchange; his mind was too busy turning things over and about. If what the Doctor said was true...a ship that could travel through time and space...perhaps three million years back? Cat was wondering about how to get the monkey girl alone to do whatever it was he was wanting to do...and for how long.



Other than a colorful encounter with a dancing troupe of Bassett Jelly Babies, it was a fairly uneventful journey back to the TARDIS. "This?" Rimmer declared with a derisive snort. "This is your spacecraft?"

"Does look a bit tight for two," Lister allowed.

"I got no problem with that," Cat drooled at Ace.

The Doctor continued to wear his beatific smile as he slipped his key into the lock. The door slid open inwards as always; he stood to one side and graciously motioned for the others to go first.

Lister, Ace and Cat made it in before problems occurred.

"Smeggin' hell!" Lister grunted in the cramped confines.

"Professor...something's wrong!" Ace cried, then squealed in shock. "Hey, you, watch the hands or you'll get an enema you'll never forget!"

The Doctor's face narrowed in concern; he brushed by a gloating Rimmer and peered within. "Oh dear," he declared quietly. Seconds later, the three people inside tumbled out again.

"Professor, the TARDIS..." Ace gasped. "It's..."

"A police box," the Time Lord filled in as he studied the interior. "Fascinating."

"But that's...."

"Impossible, Ace. Impossible. I should have anticipated this, really. Odd enough to have a spacecraft that from the outside looks like this. Probably acted as a magnet to the instability."

"But that means we're trapped here!"

"So it would seem, for the moment." The Doctor resumed his studies.

"Damn," Lister groaned, all dreams of Earth, normalcy and Chrissie Kochansky (or any combination thereof) shot to blazes.

Cat took a moment to check himself out in his mirror.

"Very well," the Doctor briskly announced. "We'll have to figure this one out with intelligence, in lieu of technology. Now then, Lister, you have mentioned this 'Holly' several times..."

"Oi. That's me," the sad-faced computer declared from a nearby screen. "Fast, sleek, sexy...that's Holly for you, all over."

"Give me a break," Rimmer muttered under his simulated breath.

The Doctor used his umbrella as a walking stick as he moved to face Holly. "You've been dabbling in temporal/spacial physics of late, haven't you?"

Holly nodded. "That's right. I've come up with the most fantastic feat in the known universe..."

"I doubt that," the Doctor cut in.

"...something that will revolutionize the way we travel." Holly paused for dramatic effect. "I'm thinking of calling it The Holly Hop Drive."

"Hols, you never told me," Lister declared.

"Never had a chance to," the computer shrugged. "Anyway, with the Hop Drive, we can travel anywhere we want to, instantaneously. Least that's the theory. Still a few bugs in the works, but I'm trackin' 'em down."

The Doctor nodded sagely. "And we have been field testing this device, haven't we, Holly?"

The computer waited a few instants too long before answering. "Yeh. I've tried it once."

"And the results weren't quite what you were hoping for, were they?" the Doctor continued in a deceptively pleasant voice.

"Not really, no," Holly reluctantly admitted.

"A few bugs in the system, no doubt."

"Yeh."

Now the Doctor's face grew tight. "Then why are you continuing to test the device, may I ask?"

"I'm not."

That made everyone, including the Doctor, quite confused. "What did you say?" the Time Lord inquired.

"I'm not continuing to test the Hop Drive. Y'see, I never stopped the first test. I couldn't. It won't shut down." Holly's face strained to put on a weak smile. "Right unsporting of it, eh?"



Lister sagged against a bulkhead. "Hols, why didn't you tell us?"
"Well, I thought I had it under control," the computer protested weakly. "How was I to know the thing's power increases exponentially over time?"

"YOU DESIGNED IT!" Rimmer screamed.

"Well, hey, nobody's perfect," Holly retorted hotly. "Besides, sooner or later it'll burn itself out..."

"...and RED DWARF with it," the Doctor included. "And possibly most of the universe as well." He gazed tiredly at the computer screen. "That explains things, as I feared. The Hop Drive is creating dimensional instability, causing this universe's laws of probability to weaken due to the interference from nearby parallel dimensions. And there has been, and will continue to be, crossovers, unless we disable the Drive."

"How are we going to do that, Professor?" Ace asked, edging away from Cat, whose hands were straying a bit too much.

"We'll split up. Ace, you and Lister will go one direction, the Cat and I will go the other. Whoever gets there first will disable the drive, be it by brains," here he doffed his hat, "or by brawn." He lifted a knowing eyebrow at his companion, who grinned and patted her backpack. "Holly, where is the Drive located?"

"Section 235, Level C, room A3458."

"Wait a minute," Rimmer protested. "What am I supposed to do while you four are racing to save the day?"

The Doctor sidled up beside him. "Yours is the most important part, Rimmer," he breathed dramatically, his Scottish brogue slipping out.

"Yes? Yes?" Rimmer begged happily.

"You'll stay here and wait. This way, you can monitor the situation and coordinate our efforts." The Doctor hooked Cat with his umbrella handle and pulled him down the left corridor; Ace and Lister headed down the right, leaving a pleased and proud Rimmer behind.

"Monitor the situation and coordinate," he murmured to himself contentedly. "Coordinate...my favorite, absolutely best thing to do...I'll keep in periodic contact with...them...." He frowned suddenly as a nagging thought fought through the fog of his brain to reach the surface.

"WAIT!" he cried, his voice echoing through the corridor. "HOW CAN I MONITOR AND COORDINATE IF YOU DON'T HAVE A WAY TO CONTACT ME?????"



The Doctor was finding out just how huge RED DWARF truly was, much to his chagrin. Mile after endless mile of identical corridor passed, with only Holly's sheepish aid with directions and Cat's constant yowling to break the tedium. The trouble was, he'd lost track of the felinoid some time ago, and the echoes of his cries were growing fainter and fainter.

At one point, the Time Lord had neared an intersection, only to pause at the sound of two voices locked in furious debate. Intrigued, he edged over to the corner to get a peek and listen in.

"Sapphire, I don't care what you say," declared a short, blond fellow with dark rings around his eyes. "It's too silly, and I refuse to participate in it!"

"Oh, come on Steel," urged the woman beside him, a blond of surpassing beauty and ageless eyes. "It's been so long since we've gotten into a storyline. It might be fun, you never know."

"I demand to be treated with respect!" Steel bellowed. "Bad enough that most people don't even know who we are..."

"With your constant bickering and petty demands, it's no wonder," she snorted. "Respect...hah! You're so bloody stuffy and uptight, you wouldn't know respect if it came up and hit you in the face!"

At that moment, a lemon meringue pie flew out of nowhere and smacked the fellow square in the face. "GAHHH!" he bellowed, and abruptly popped of existence. Sapphire smiled and shook her head, following suit a heartbeat later.

The Doctor turned the corner and stared at the spot where they'd been. "Amateurs," he quietly declared then headed onward.

"Holly!" he bellowed. "How much further?"

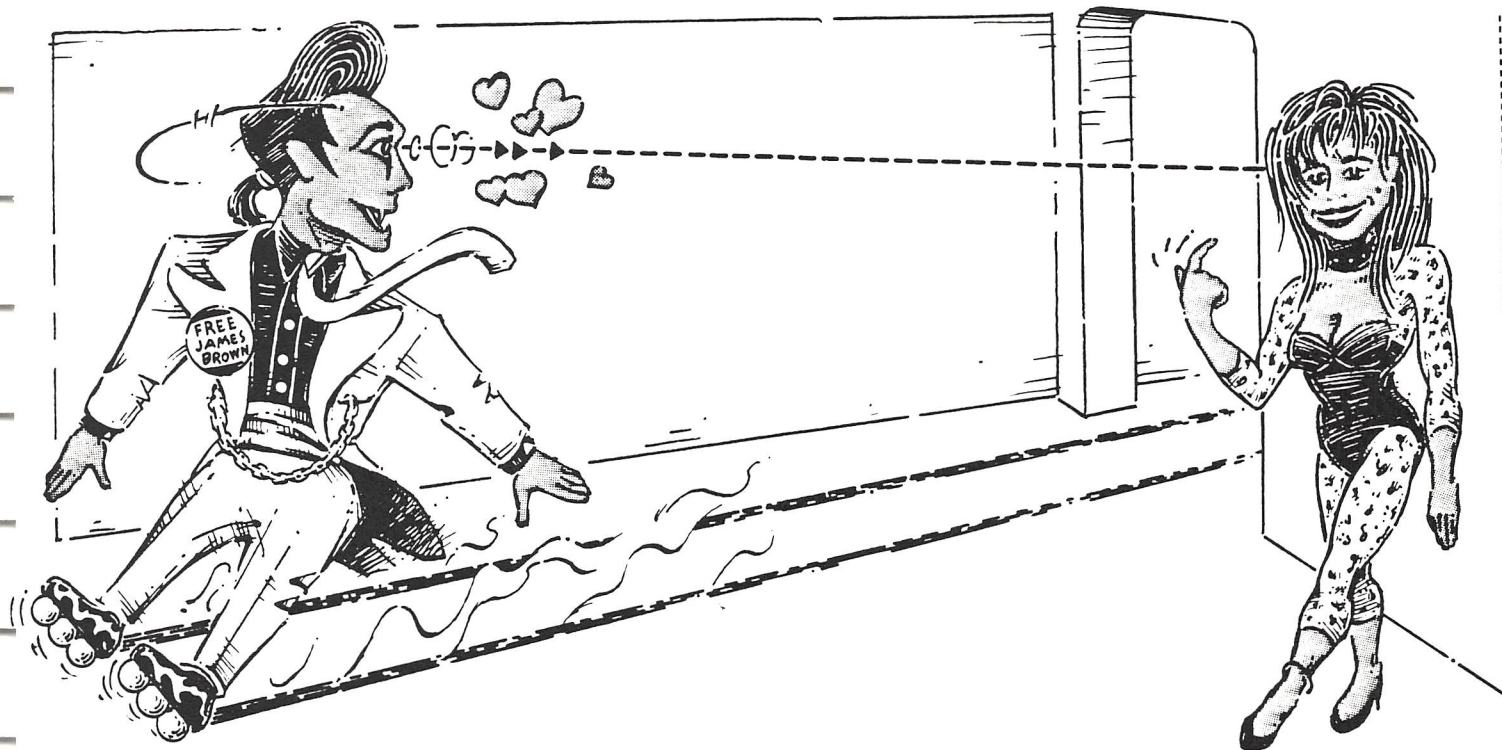
"Oh, a ways," the computer replied calmly. "I think I've got you on the right track now."

"...the right track..."

"Yeh, I got a bit turned around a ways back, but you're definitely getting there now." Holly smiled confidently. "Just go two kilometers, then turn right, and straight on from there." Sighing heavily, the Doctor trudged ahead; Holly watched him go, then frowned slightly.

"Or was it to the left..?"





Cat had gone to the right, executing a flawless ninety-degree turn on his skates and flying like black lightning. As he rolled along, he howled a merry little ditty his father had taught him, something about a female in heat, a bullwhip, and fourteen pounds of cold sesame noodles.

Suddenly a long, slender arm slipped out from the shadows, connected to a set of fingers that beckoned seductively. "Here, kitty, kitty," a husky feminine voice crooned. Cat slammed on the brakes and sniffed the air attentively.

"Hey, if whatever smells so good's around here, come out and show yourself!" Cat demanded, brushing his suit sleeves off. "How else you gonna see greatness in its entirety?"

There was a whisper of motion from behind him, and as Cat whirled around on his tiptoes, he froze in utter amazement. She was a bit short in height, but her exotic features and supple figure were enough to start his hormones into overtime production. "Here, kitty, kitty," she repeated, her full red lips flowing like a tidal wave with each word. "Paula wants to...play..."

Cat threw back his head, howled the ritual scream of "scoring big", and vanished with the girl back into the shadows.



Lister screeched his motorbike to a squealing halt, then grinned over at Ace, who sat in the hastily-added sidecar. "So, whattya think?" he demanded. "Is this tops or is this tops?"

"Wicked," the young woman smiled back, a greedy gaze of hunger in her eyes. "I get to drive next."

"Okay, that's fair." Lister hopped off the seat and stretched. "Quick rest stop, and check in with Holly, then it's off again." He scratched his behind and looked around. "I'm for a loo, be back in a mo'."

"No problem." Ace disentangled herself from the sidecar and walked around, still slightly awed by the size of the spaceship she was in. Never before had she seen anything like it, where distance was measured in thousands of kilometers. It was incredible...but somehow, lonely as well.

She shivered slightly and shifted her mind into more practical pursuits. Hungry, she recalled Lister talking about the multitude of food dispensers lining the walls of RED DWARF. Smiling to herself, she picked a wall and followed it until she found something that matched the description. Unfortunately, somebody else was there first, drinking from a styrofoam cup.

"Mmmmm," the stranger, a tall, slender man with dark hair and sharp eyes commented. He was dressed in an Earthish business suit; for some reason, he immediately made Ace think 'narc'. "I'll have another one of those," he informed the wall, which promptly produced another cup of steaming dark fluid. "Thanks," he added, and was about to down the contents when he caught sight of Ace. "Hello," he smiled brightly.



"...Hello," Ace dumbly rejoined, unsure of what to make of this one.

Before she could move, he was grabbing her hand and shaking it firmly. "How do you do? FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper, at your service." He held up the cup and beamed at it. "You know, I've been all over the world, hit every restaurant from New York to Istanbul, but this...this is the best damn coffee I have ever had in my life!"

"I...I'm very happy for you," Ace stammered.

He sipped at the coffee, savoring the taste for all it was worth, then looked at her again. "You know, perhaps you could help me. I'm involved in this murder investigation, and I had to go to the bathroom--too much coffee does that--so Harry pulled over at Big Ed's Gas Farm, and I opened the door to the men's room---and here I am, God knows where!" He smiled again, but the expression was slightly tense and drawn. "Just where is this?"

"Ahhh...it's called RED DWARF, it's a spaceship." Ace bit her lip and took a deep breath. "Of course, this might just be a dream, or hallucination. You might have fallen when you went into the bathroom, and hit your head."

To her surprise, Cooper nodded amiably. "That would make sense," he agreed. "I have to say you're a damn sight cuter than that dancing dwarf, though." His face brightened at that thought. "Say--that's right! 'Red Dwarf', and dancing dwarf! My subconscious must be trying to tell me something!" He stared at Ace for a long moment. "So--who do you say killed Laura Palmer?"

"Huh?"

"Well, every other dream I've had with a dwarf involved told me who killed her--why not you?"

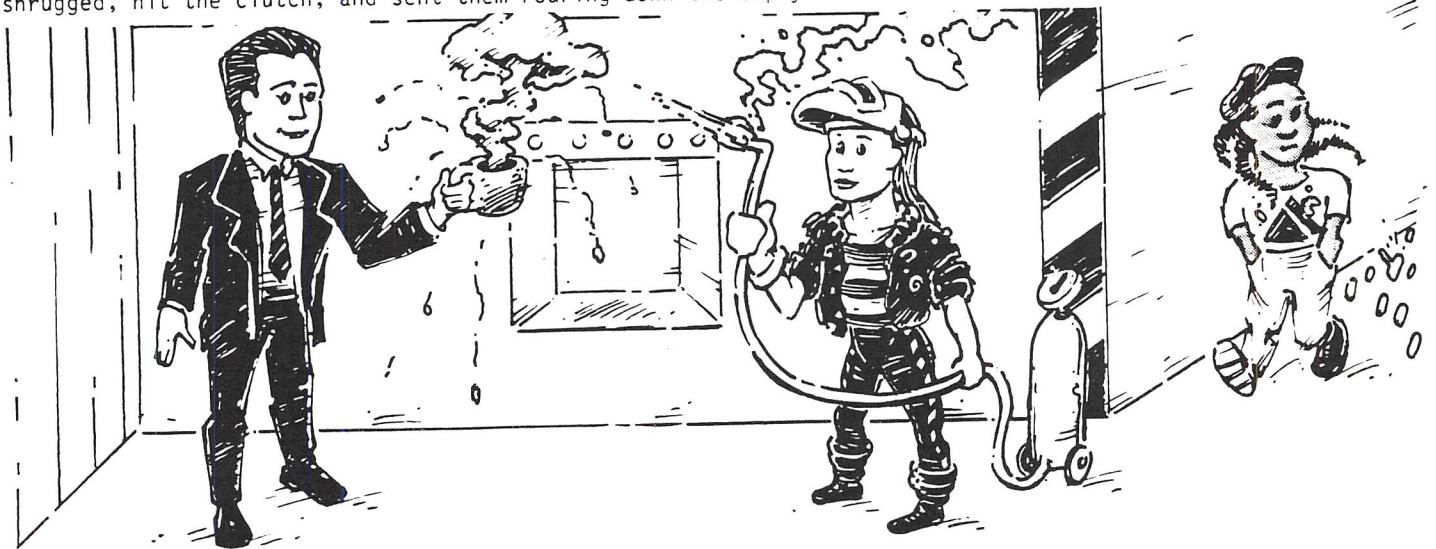
"Because...because you have to do it yourself!" Ace gushed. "Look, you have to get back to where you belong, umm...click your heels three times and think about where you come from! Fast!"

"Can't I try the cherry pie first?" Cooper asked wistfully.

"No! Do it now!" The FBI agent sighed and obeyed; to Ace's surprise, he abruptly "poited" out of existence, just as Lister came rolling up on the motorbike.

"You okay?" he asked as she climbed into the sidecar.

"Yeah," she nodded absently. "Let's just go--there's too much weirdness in this place for me." Lister shrugged, hit the clutch, and sent them roaring down the empty corridor.



Rimmer'd been had.

He wasn't quite sure just how, but Rimmer knew that the Doctor had pulled a fast one and left him out of the action. As if he were utterly smegging useless, unable to help out in any way.

Well, perhaps he had a point, Rimmer noted to himself as he paced around the command room. Being a hologram, he couldn't touch anything, couldn't do much of anything except advise and look pompous, when you got right down to it. Not exactly "saving the day" assets for a hero.

But at the same time--the Doctor had chosen Cat over him. Cat, who was lazy, vain, easily distracted, self-centered...Rimmer began to feel distinctly uncomfortable along that line of reasoning, and was just about to abandon it when he heard a voice coming closer.

"Sam?" the voice called out, the echoes reverberating through the darkness. "Sam, cut the crap, I've figured out the problem and I can get you back within your own timeline...oh, hello." Rimmer's mouth fell open as a smallish, dark haired fellow wearing a silver jacket walked through the command center wall. Not the nearby door, the wall. "Say, you haven't seen anyone acting odd lately, have you?"

"You're sure this is it, Holly?" the Doctor demanded tiredly leaning against his umbrella. It'd taken him several hours of walking through a maze of identical corridors to get this far; along the way, he'd encountered two SF conventions, a talking cabbage, and a herd of Muppet babies that he'd had to club with his broly to get past.

Holly's face flickered into life on a nearby screen. "Yeh, I think we've got it, Doc. That's where the Hop Drive is."

"I wonder where Cat and the others are," the Time Lord mused quietly as he rested. "Have you any idea, Holly?"

The computer paused for a second or two. "The cat is in one of the crew quarters, probably taking another nap. Dave and your friend should be arriving in about ten minutes. They're racing something called a DeLorean down one of the main corridors....hmmm. That's odd."

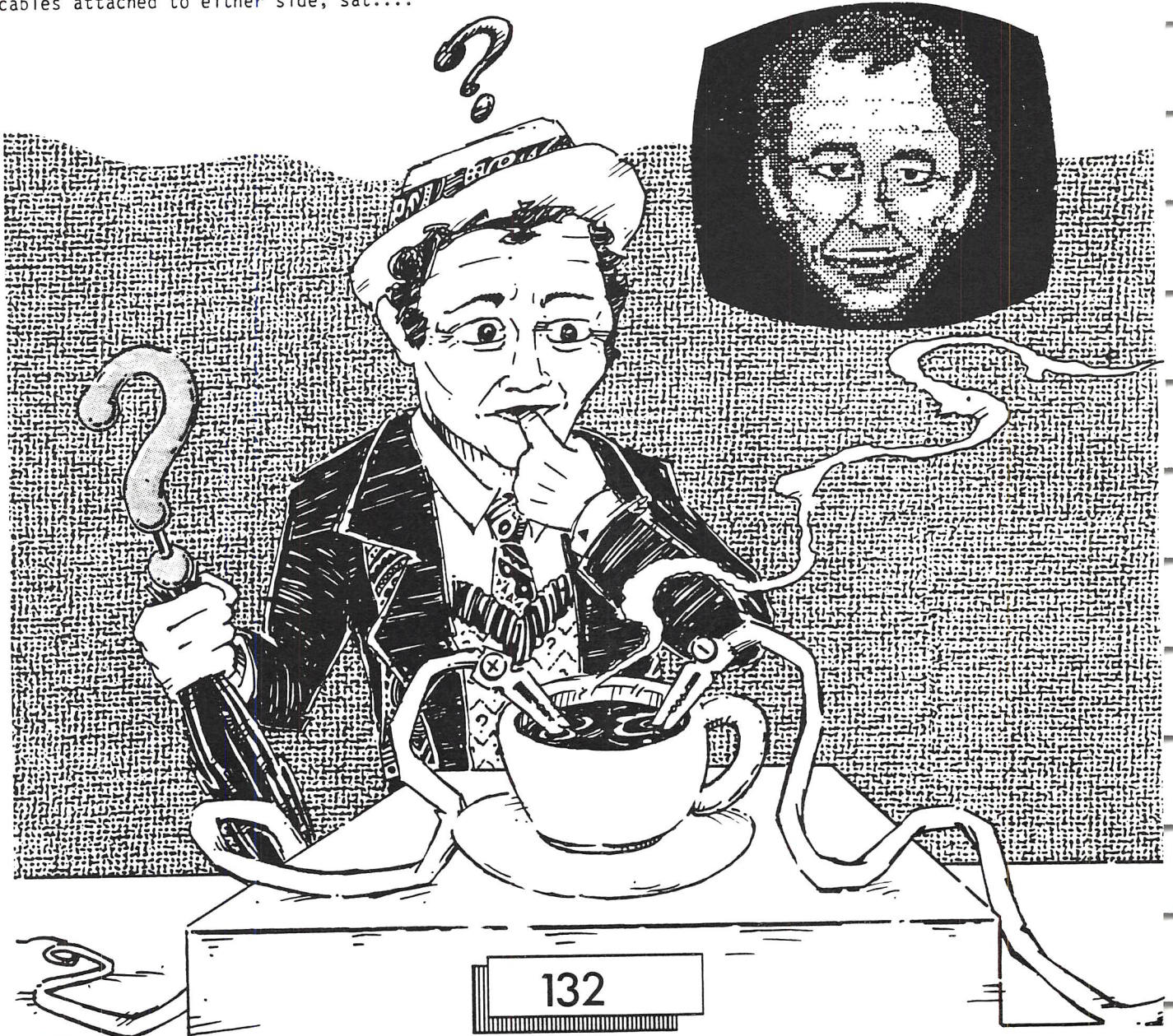
"What?" the Doctor sighed.

"Well, the other car hit 88 miles per hour and vanished from my sensors. Oh well, Dave will get here before too long. Have a seat, won't be a moment."

"I think not," the Doctor rose to his feet and headed towards the door to the engine area. "This has gone on quite enough. It's time for an ending. Open the door, Holly."

In response, the portal hissed into the recesses of the wall. The Doctor smiled grimly and walked into the small room. "I was expecting something far more vast," he commented.

"Aaah, didn't take much, once I figured out the principle of the drive." The Doctor nodded silently as he strolled around the confines. There were a series of consoles lining each wall, the lights flickering on and off in various places. But in the center of the room, there sat a small table, with a set of jumper cables attached to either side, sat....



"A cup of tea," the Doctor breathed. "Holly, you used an Infinite Improbability Drive for your device."
"Yeah," the computer agreed amiably. "Read about it in a book a million or so years back, decided to see if it really worked."

The Doctor stuck a finger into the concoction and stirred it. "Still warm, I see." He then slipped the finger into his mouth. "Ah. Earl Grey. Excellent choice. But that still doesn't explain...wait." Again the finger plunged into the concoction, again he tasted the sample. "There's something wrong here..."

"That's correct," a haughty, bold voice announced from behind him. Turning around slowly, the Time Lord studied the stranger before him--and the sword that cleaved the distance between them. The newcomer was dressed in black Elizabethian clothing, his face lined with a neatly-trimmed beard. "Stand still, my friend," he announced in a grating voice. "You stand in the presence of Edmund Blackadder, and I will have answers to my questions or else."

"Else what?" the Doctor asked, his eyes crossing as they studied the point of Blackadder's blade.

"Else I shall carve you into a thousand pieces and present you to the Queen as a jigsaw puzzle with sausage." He smiled thinly. "Now, if you'll so kindly tell me where I am and how I came to be here..."

"Yes, please do," came a voice just like the first. "I would also like to know where this braggart got the absolute gall to imitate me." This newcomer bore an odd resemblance to the first, but his was the clothing of a butler during the time of the Regency. "My name is Edmund Blackadder, and I don't take kindly to usurpers." He pulled out a musket and aimed it at the Elizabethian.

"What in the bloody hell is that?" the dandy asked the butler.

"If I may be of service..." the Doctor called out, but was ignored as a third version of the Blackadder, this one dressed in the garb of a World War I captain in the King's Army, appeared in the doorway. "Dear God, Baldrick," he declared, "somebody held a Blackadder costume party and forgot to invite the original." He glanced around behind him. "Private Baldrick? Damn it, Balders, where did you run off now..."

And as the Doctor watched in fascinated horror, another Blackadder, and another, and another came into the room. Different times, different garb, but all bore the same face and name--and all were equally disdainful of the others. "This has gone far enough," he murmured to himself, and edged ever so quietly to the cup of tea for further examination.

All it took was a look at the tea bag. "Holly," he sighed in exasperation. "This is a decaffeinated tea you've used! It's no wonder the temporal instability exists!"

"Why so it is," the computer remarked over the din of Blackadders arguing amongst themselves. "Guess Dave must have used up all the regulars."

"Never mind." The Doctor fished through a jacket pocket, at long last producing a dry bag of his own. With one hand he withdrew the used bag; with the other he quickly dipped the new one in.

There was a soft hum, followed instantly by the descent of silence as a plethora of Edmund Blackadders popped back into their own continuum. The Doctor smiled smugly to himself and strolled out of the room, to find Ace and Lister just rolling up in the cycle.

"Professor!" the young lady declared as she jumped out of the car seat. "You won't believe what just happened! We were rolling along, trying to get here in time..."

"...and we got stuck in the middle of a huge group of video pirates looking for bootleg 'third season' something..." Lister continued breathlessly.

"...when suddenly they all just went 'poit!' and vanished!" Ace finished up. Her eyes narrowed abruptly as she studied the pleased look on the Doctor's face. "Let me guess. You had something to do with it."

"Indeed," the Doctor nodded. "Let's just say that it's 'in the bag'."



On the trip back, they retrieved Cat, who was quite displeased about something that made absolutely no sense whatsoever. "So here we are, gettin' ready to party, when the next thing I know I'm lying in bed by myself, no idea what's happened or what it was like!" he spat angrily.

"Professor," Ace asked as the TARDIS came in view, "why didn't we vanish when you fixed the device like the others did?"

"I suspect that we will as soon as we enter the TARDIS," he replied. "A sort of 'leave as you came' condition, of sorts. At any rate, we're almost there."

Rimmer was pacing angrily in front of the blue call box. "Where have you been?" he demanded of Lister. "Do you have any idea of how long I've been waiting here without any notion of what happened? If not for Holly, I'd have thought you all dead by now! Well?"



"Afraid so. Thanks for letting me drive your bike," Ace said as she hugged him briefly.

"Afraid so. Thanks for letting me drive your bike," Ace said as she hugged him briefly.

"Doctor?" The Time Lord paused before entering his ARDIS. Lister screwed up his courage and opened his throat. "I was wonderin'...I mean, I'm kinda stuck here by meself, cept for Cat and Rimmer, and your ship go through time and space..."

go through time and space...
 "I'm afraid I couldn't," the Doctor answered with a gentle shake of his head. "This isn't our universe;
 I be shifted into our own dimension the instant these doors close. You wouldn't fit in our universe. But
 strong, David. All things come to they who wait. Trust a nine-hundred year old Time Lord on this."
 "Thanks anyway."

"Okay," Lister glumly and reluctantly accepted. "Thanks anyway."

"Oh, one more thing," the Doctor added. "Most of the temporal interfaces should be gone by now. But there might be the odd leftover. Don't worry too much about it." He waved in farewell and slipped inside the box, which seconds later faded from sight.

"Cheer up, Dave," Holly urged. "How's about we try the Holly Hop now for a spin? I think I've got it t..."

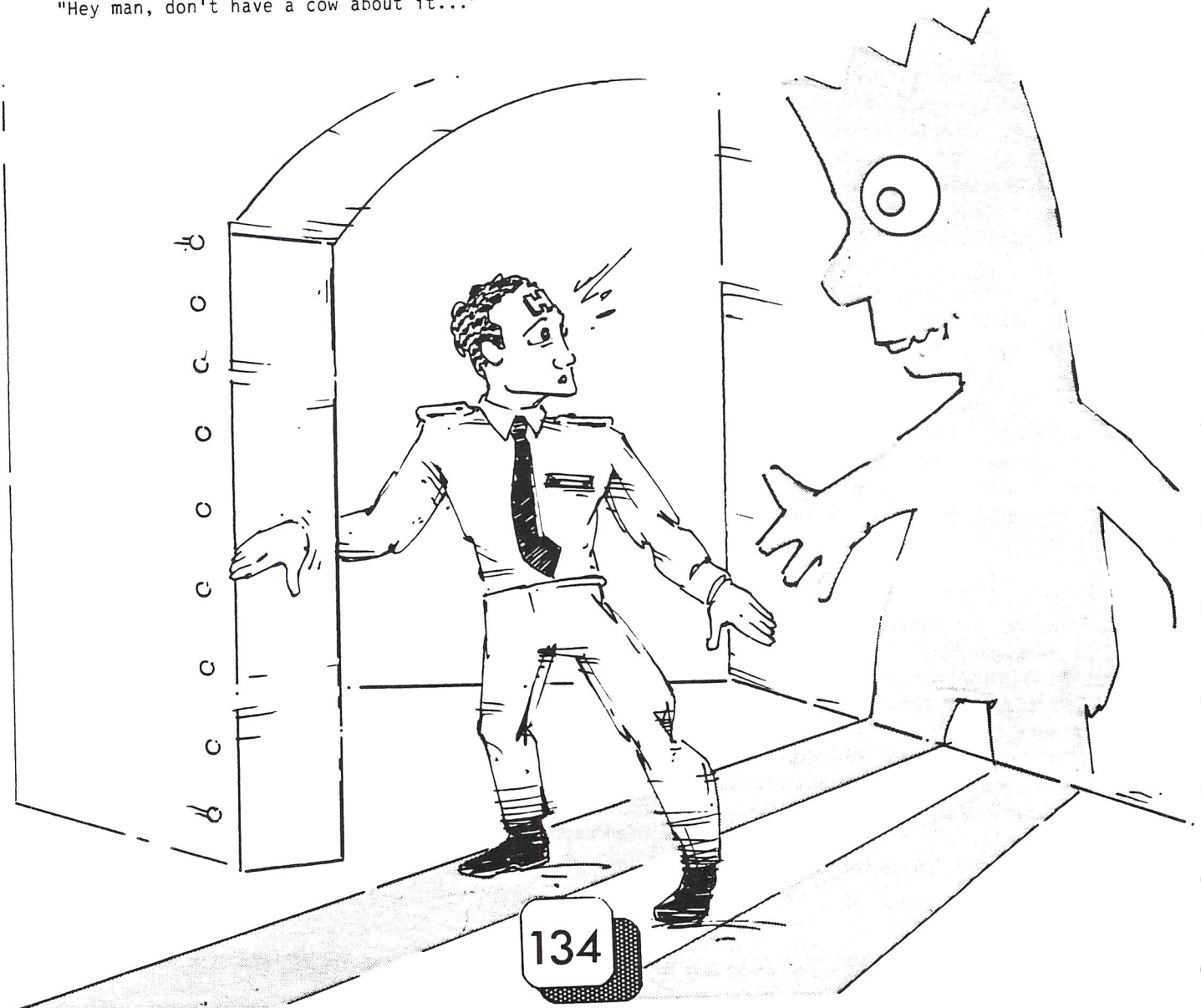
"Hols," Lister shivered, "let's give it a bit of a rest, eh?"



"Imagine the nerve," Rimmer growled to himself as he entered the quarter he shared with Lister. "Giving the silent treatment! After all I've done for him! That smegging little incompetent..."

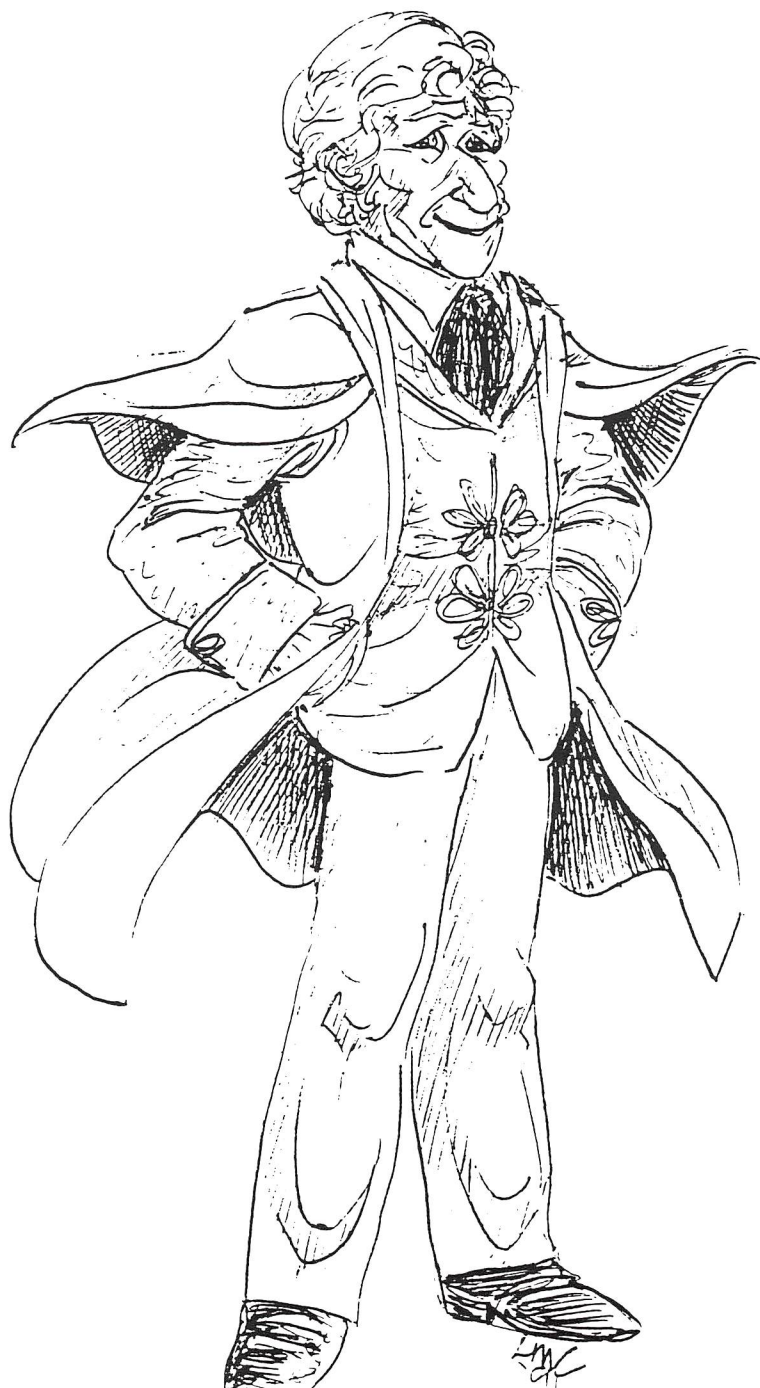
Rimmer froze as, from behind him, he heard a small voice:

"Hey man, don't have a cow about it..."



DOCTOR WHOIES!

A gallery of pieces by Lisa Conner, Kevin Duncan & Al Manachino, Mark Sellmeyer and Sandra Williams, featuring the guy who travelled through time before Sam Beckett even thought about quantum leaping!



HOW DO I DRIVE THE STAKE IN?



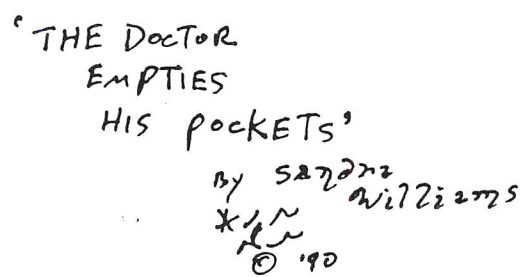
BY SANDRA WILLIAMS



Supreme President Servalan,
Your Presence is Requested for Tea on
Ribusnix-5, 3rd Month, 15th day, 12 p.m.
Central Galifreyan Time.
-the Rani



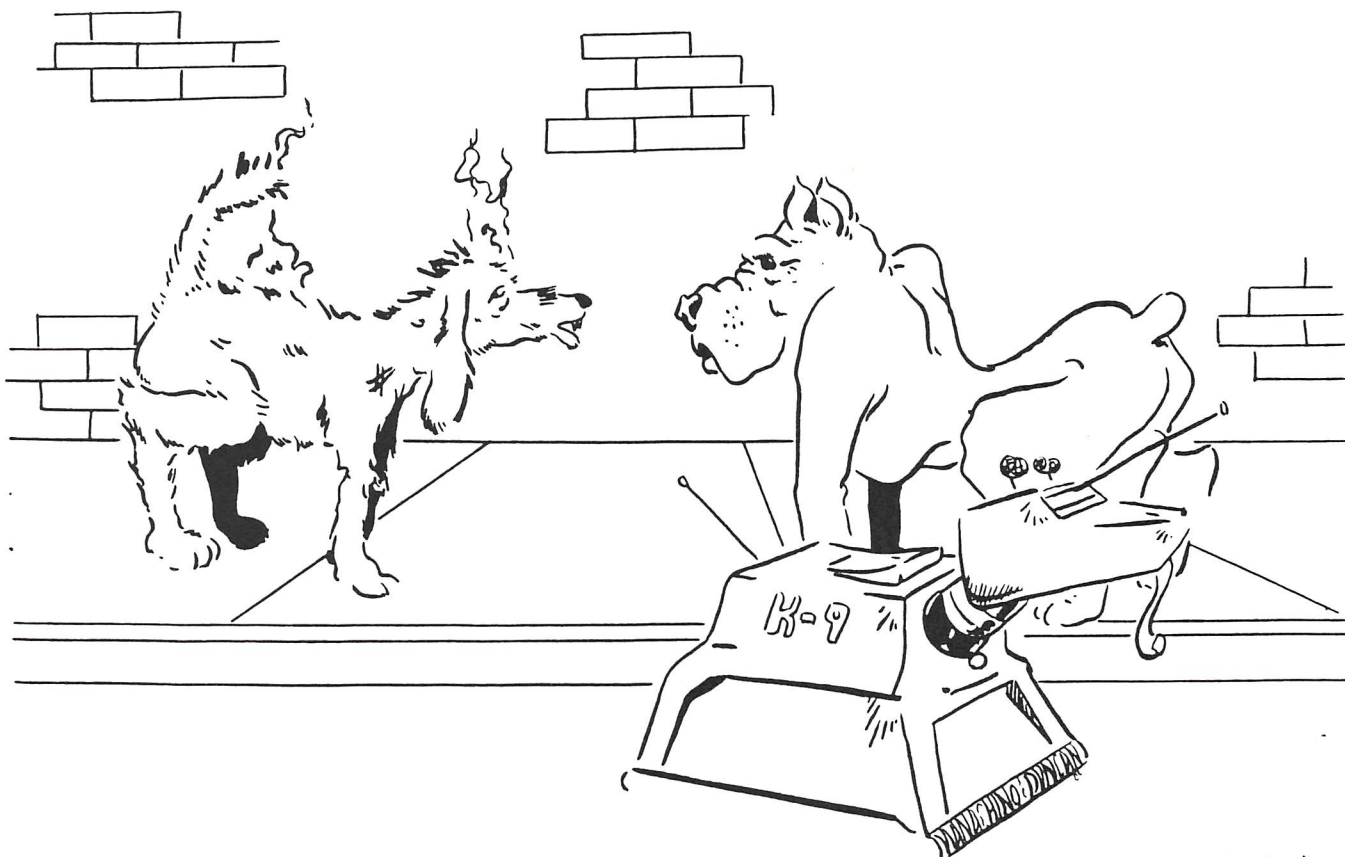
SELMYER-89





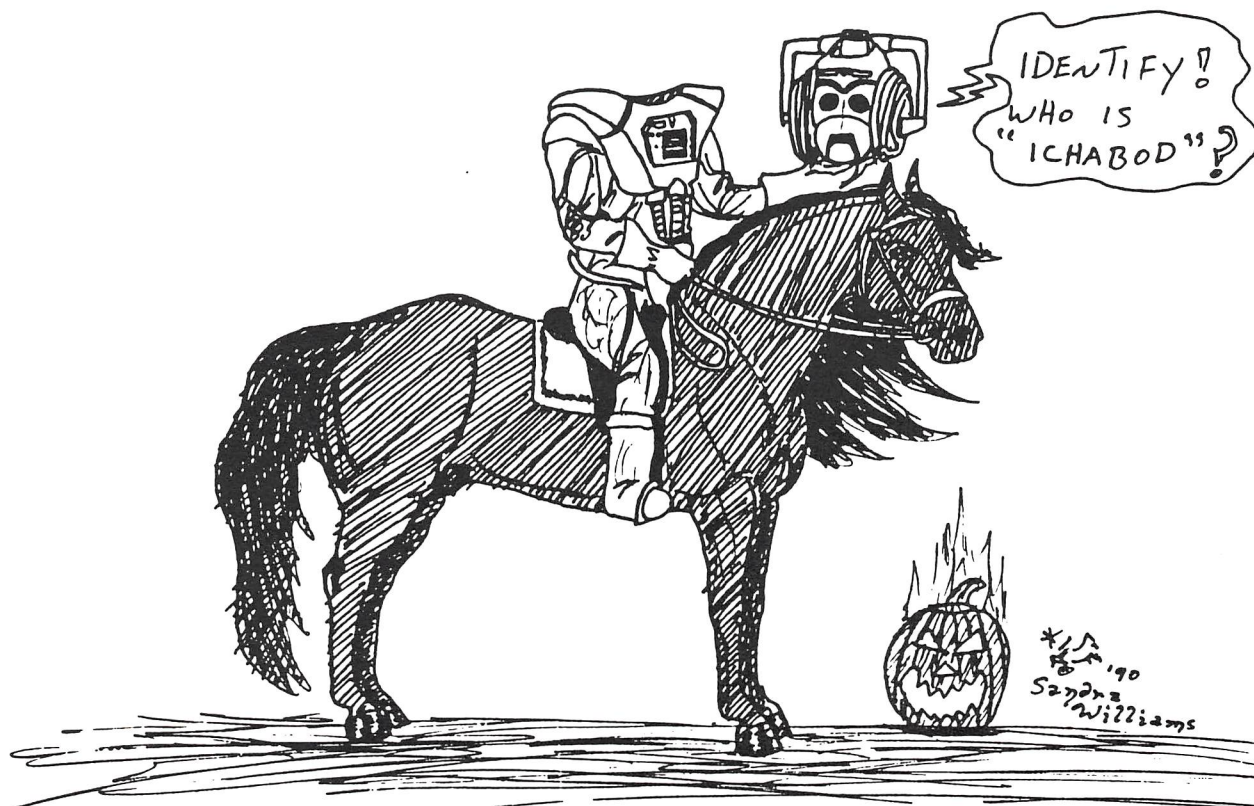


BY SANDRA
 WILLIAMS



'I STUCK MY NOSE UNDER HIS TAIL AND ALMOST GOT ELECTROCUTED.'

THE HEADLESS HORSE CYBERMAN



WAIT A MINUTE!!!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU
WOULD GET FUEL NEXT
STOP!!!

BY SANDRA WILLIAMS



'THIS IS ONE OF THOSE
SILENT WHISTLES ONLY
K-9 CAN HEAR.'



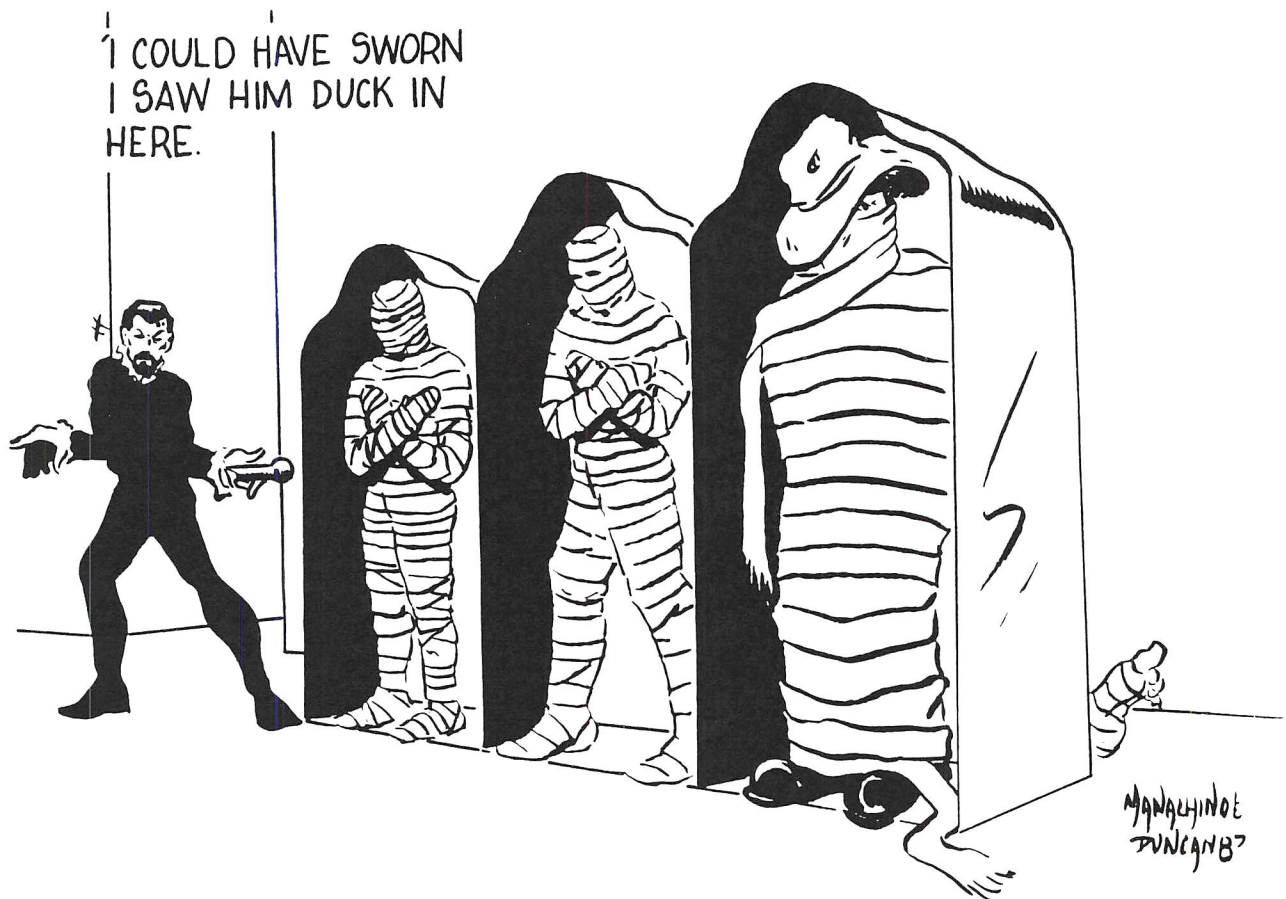
IT'S NOT EASY TO BELIEVE
THAT SOMEBODY'S BEEN LYING TO ME,
BUT WHEN THE WRONG WORD GOES IN THE
RIGHT EAR,



I
KNOW YOU'VE BEEN
LYING TO ME!
IT'S GETTING ROUGH
UNDERCOVER,
GOT TO SAY, "ENOUGH'S ENOUGH!"

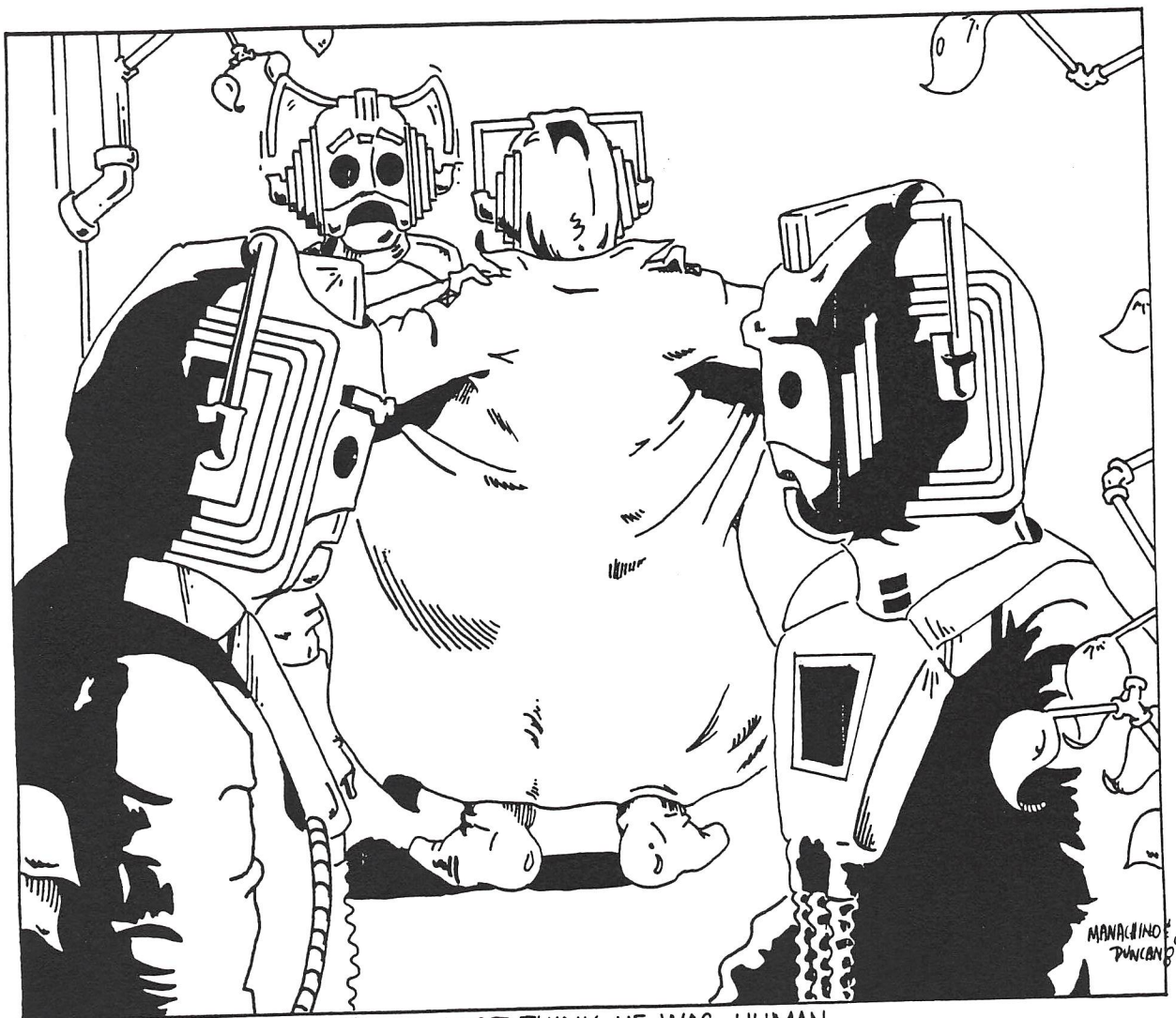
COLIN BAKER IN HIS NEXT CAREER:
"FOOL AND THE CATHER WALLS."

"One Thing Leads to Another"



BY SANDRA WILLIAMS

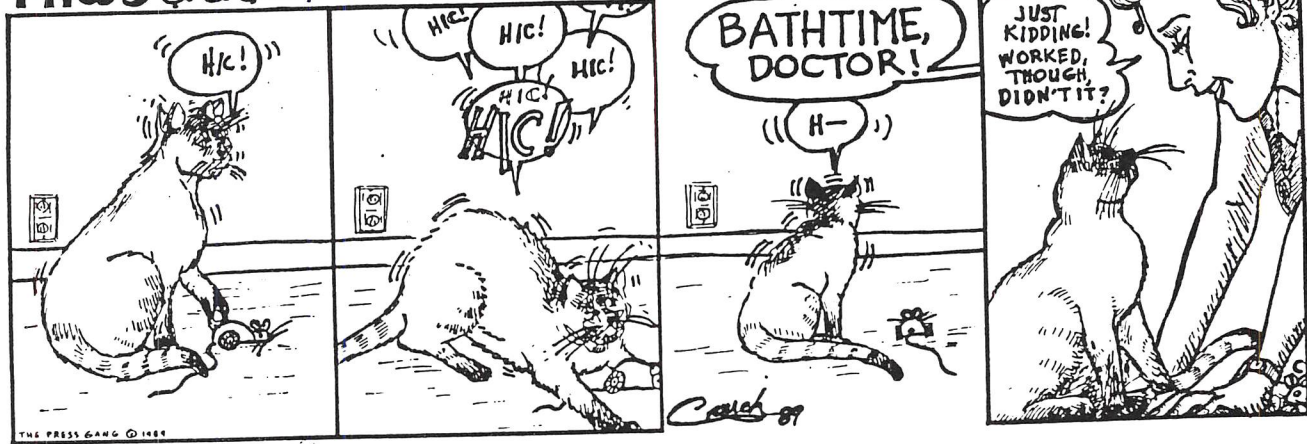




YOU'D ALMOST THINK HE WAS HUMAN.

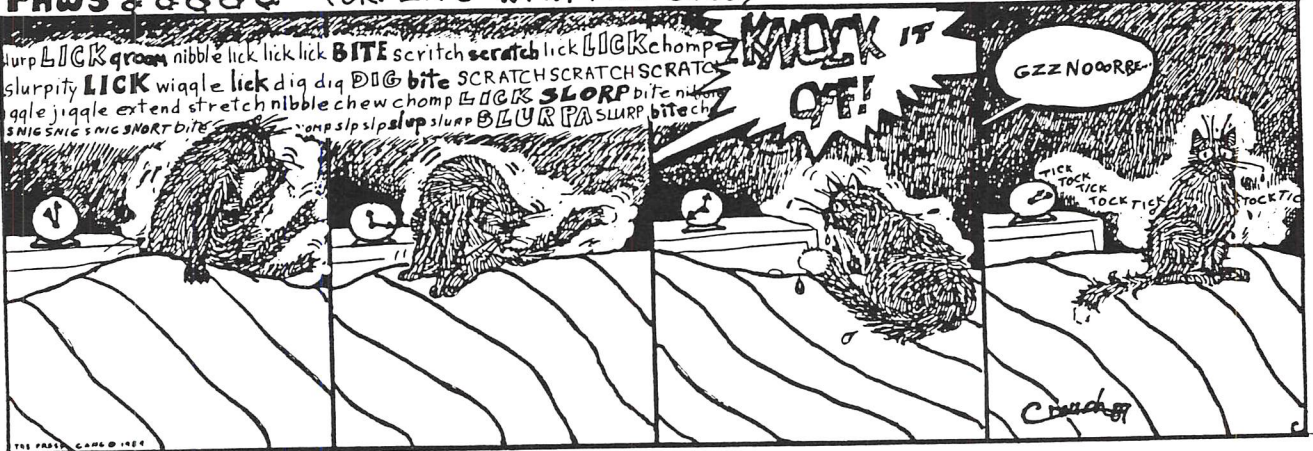


PAWS & ☺☺☺☺ (OR: Life with five CATS)



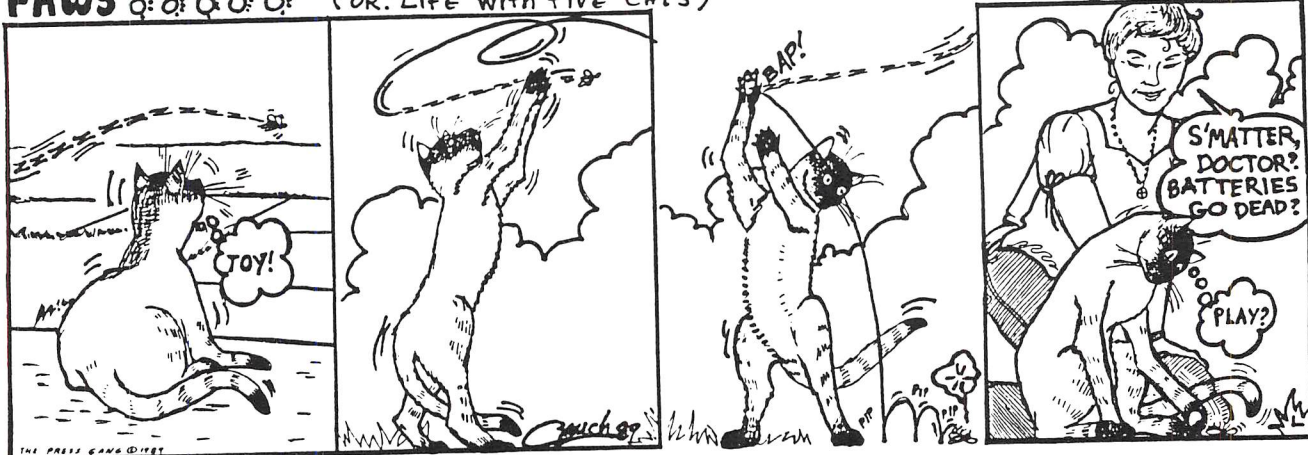
PAWS & ☺☺☺☺ (OR: Life with five CATS)

McGREW/CROUCH



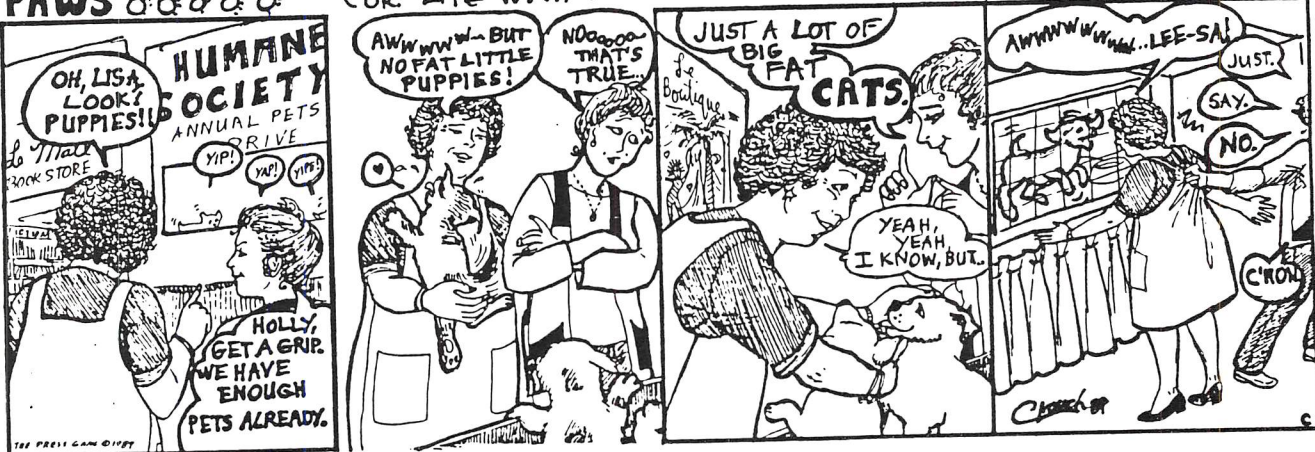
PAWS & ☺☺☺☺ (OR: Life with five CATS)

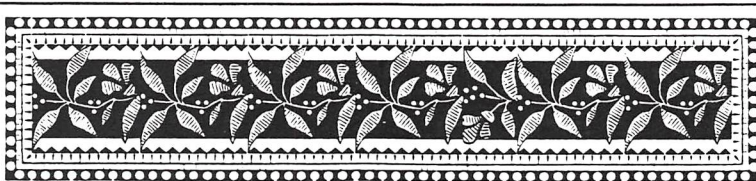
McGREW/CROUCH



PAWS & ☺☺☺☺ (OR: Life with five CATS)

McGREW/CROUCH





CROSSED CARDS

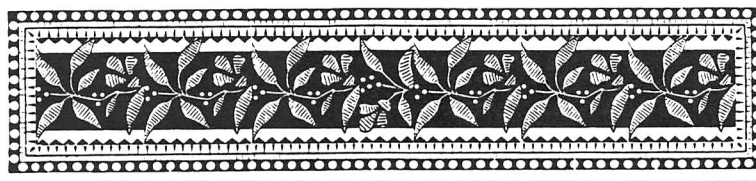
King of swords
Crosses a harp of gold,
Testimony to two lives joined
By some inexplicable chance of fate.

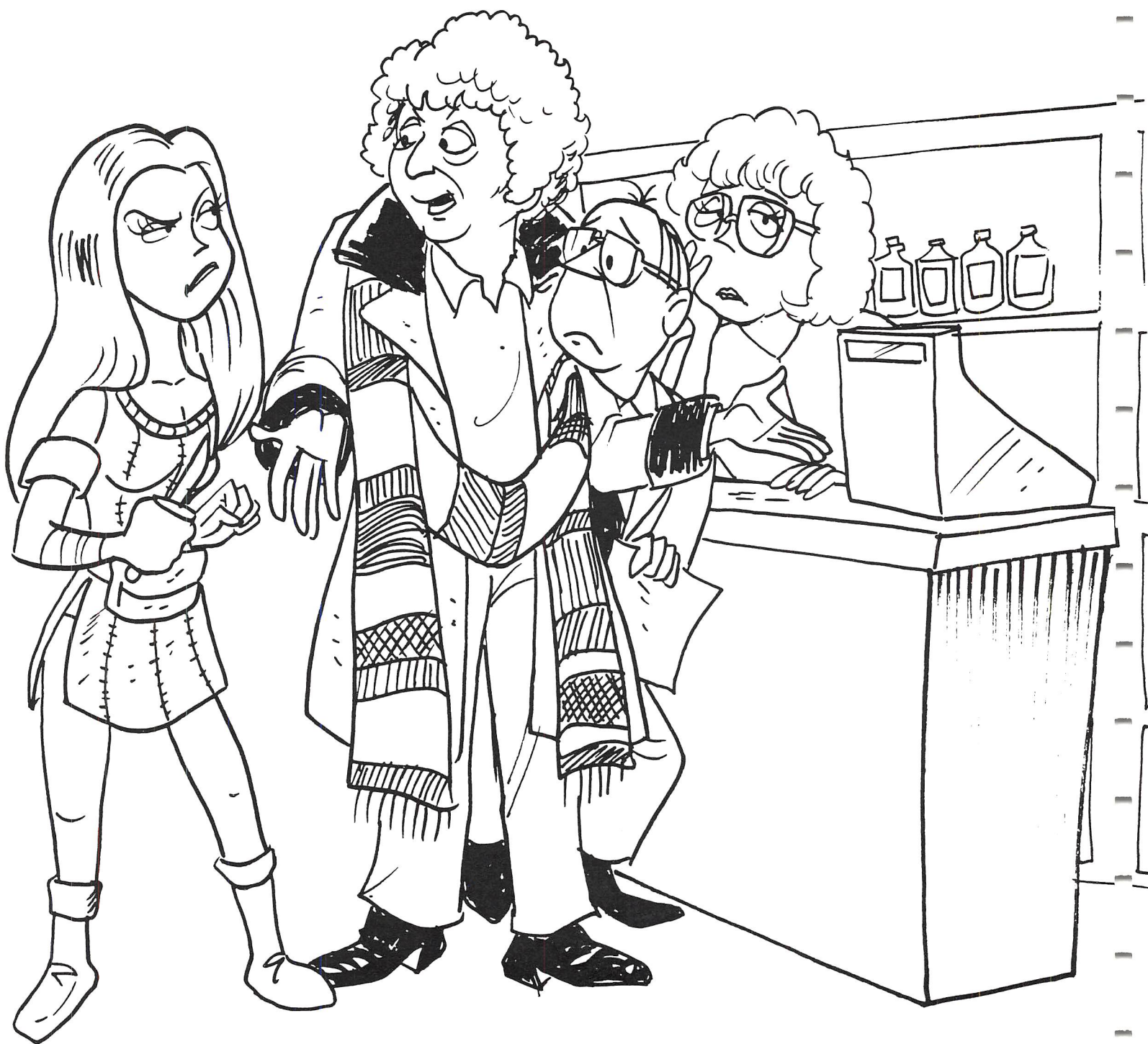
One a ghost-killer,
Bringer of death eternal.
The other a minstrel,
Weaver of timeless melodies.

You've been through Hell itself,
And secrets have been told.
Secrets that bind you to each other,
As solidly as the link between you does.

What other dangers will you face together?
What other cards will you cross
Before the card of Death meets you
And takes both your lives away?

Melissa Mastoris





ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

JULIA JAY

ART BY CHRIS COOK

Expertly balancing phone between ear and elbow, the technician jabbed at a worn keypad. A look of extreme exasperation crossed her face at what appeared on the computer screen.

"Mrs. Gardner, I don't suppose you know the name of the medication, by any chance?" It wasn't easy to keep her voice from betraying her opinion of the rather low ratio between Mrs. Gardner's intellect and a procaryotic organism, but she had plenty of practice. When the conversation ended a few minutes later she hung up the phone with a sigh of relief.

It had been a very long day. The latest flu strain had obviously not been informed that respiratory disease season ended in April. Even after two years of working in a pharmacy, it still amazed her how quickly human beings could metamorphosize into a pack of rabid wild dogs. What we need to get, she thought to herself, is a pitching machine. We could put the medication in the little glove and throw it at people. In her mind's eye she could just picture a compact bottle of 150mg Zantac hurtling through the air at 90 miles an hour, its trajectory aimed straight at somebody's head.

Dragging a hand through her light blond curls, she peered over the barricade of books and flower pots she'd erected to see if anyone was headed her way. Her eyes opened saucer-wide when she saw the motley trio approaching her. On the far right was a small, harried looking man clutching a long, fancy-looking document (the word 'letter' not even coming close to describing this piece of America's forest) in one hand and a pen in the other. He seemed to be both running and arguing with the group's second male. It was stifling hot outside, yet this...person...was decked out--the tech's jaw dropped in utter disbelief--in at least FOUR layers of warm clothing, topped off by a thick, wool, ridiculously long multicolored scarf. The wardrobe alone pegged him as an escapee from a place that conducted group therapy and kept a large supply of tranquilizers handy. Trailing a few feet behind him was a woman dressed in what looked to be a handsewn leather mini-dress right out of Playboy's Amazon Women edition, sporting both a bandaged arm and a sullen expression.

The little man with the document was obviously trying to get her attention. His squawking could be heard four rows down. As far as annoyance levels went, she would rate it eight-tenths lower than Pledge Month at school. Completely unrepentant, the technician casually walked to the counter so she wouldn't miss a word of the conversation.

"Madam, while I do not want you to feel at all pressured I do wish I could press upon you the urgency of the situation. Time is money, after all." The speaker cast his pale, watery eyes to her impassive face and sped up his begging. "If you would only read," eagerly he flapped the document in front of her eyes, creating a pleasant breeze, "this document, I'm sure this matter could be hastily concluded for the benefit of all parties."

"My dear fellow," a beautifully deep, smooth voice with more than a trace of annoyance in it answered him. "I've already told you, you don't have to keep following us around. My friend and I are just passing through, so it's not really necessary," he spread his hands out in a gesture of tolerance, "for us to sign anything."

To say these calm words did not placate the man would have been a gross understatement. The little man's face flushed an alarming red and his orchestrated choral screams would have put a lottery winner to shame.

"Not sign! Not sign!! How could you ever think I would allow such a thing?" So intent was he on getting this point across that he advanced on the taller man, only to draw back abruptly (along with a very frightened technician) as a sharp, dangerous looking knife flashed in the woman's good hand.

"I have told you once...Director of Museum...do not speak in such a way to the Doctor." The woman advanced on him with a very determined glint in her eyes and tossed back her tawny hair. "He will place his magic words upon your do-cu-ment at his appointed time."

"Please, please I'm sorry. I forgot." The man backed away, looking wildly about him for cover. He finally chose the 18 feet of yarn, nearly garotting its owner in the process. "Doctor," he tugged further on the scarf only to have it ripped from his hands by its doting owner, "won't you speak to your patient?"

The Doctor's blue eyes filled with longing as he looked at the knife but he decisively shook his head. "Put the knife away, Leela, but do keep it handy." There was an unspoken threat in his voice. The woman continued to angle the shiny blade at the small man for a few minutes as if to make a point. The three then waited for the technician to hang up the phone. She had been frantically attempting to dial 911 before something dreadful happened, such as complete mayhem, spilt blood or worse: Geraldo Rivera clamoring for an eyewitness interview for his latest journalistic masterpiece--"Strange Knife-Wielding Women, Who They Dice Up, And the Men Who Love Them".

"Hello, Miss," the one addressed as 'Doctor' turned to the technician, who managed to smile weakly in return. He had beautiful, hypnotic blue eyes, an untamed mass of curly brown hair, and an infectious grin.

"I am the Doctor, this is my friend Leela," he indicated the woman in the leather miniskirt, "and this nice man is Mr. Hensen," he clapped his hand on the shoulder of the man cowering beside him, "senior administrator of the Edison Museum. You see, Leela," suddenly his deep voice carried a teasing lilt as he half turned to look at his companion, "had a little accident."

"Accident, yes it was definitely an accident," Mr. Hensen nodded enthusiastically. Leela scowled horribly at the Doctor.

The Doctor pulled out an Indiana Jones cast-off hat from a deep pocket of his tan frockcoat and slid it over his curls. He then leaned forward on the tabletop and said in a stage whisper, "I don't suppose you'd be interested in hearing about what happened, would you?"

"Doctor, I do not want..." his companion interrupted him, but the curly headed man continued blithely on, too fond of the sound of his own voice to cease and desist. For a genius he could be awfully dense sometimes.

"Leela, the great and mighty huntress," his deep, baritone voice drowned out Leela's sullen muttering, "as swift as the wind, as graceful as a gazelle, lost," he started to snicker, "her balance on a centrifuge platform and was launched through the air--straight into a wild, ravenous man-eating pack of potted plants which she then vanquished," he waved his arms about wildly to demonstrate Leela's knife-wielding capabilities, "in woman-to-botany combat."

"The great spinning temple was possessed by evil spirits," the woman blurted out, causing the Doctor to halt his overly dramatic rendition and glare irritably at her.

"I've told you a thousand times, Leela," his tone was completely exasperated, "there are no such things as evil spirits! The display was simply a motorized platform to instruct the tormentally deprived children of this age the basics of force and velocity. Elementary physics." The Doctor waved his hands about wildly once again, this time nearly poking out one of Mr. Hensen's eyes in the process. "The reason we visited the museum in the first place was to teach you..."

In an instant the two were arguing with all the vehemence of a family moving two dogs and the household furniture cross-country, with such words as "savage", "demons", "primitive violence", "great Xoonon", "magic gaggalgook" filling the air. Suddenly the administrator reached a breaking point.

"WILL YOU TWO SHUT UP!" he screeched, the sheer decibel pitch on his voice capturing the Doctor and Leela's attention--no mean feat. The two combatants stopped in mid-breath and turned to the beet-faced man with some surprise. Rather guiltily the Doctor shuffled his feet a bit then muttered, "We're going to have a very long talk about this when we get back to the TARDIS."

"All of your talks are long, Doctor," Leela retorted, "and deal with what you think is right. Well, perhaps I am just a savage but that does not mean I am mindless or..."

"Excuse me," the technician interrupted them, her only wish to get them out of her vicinity before they broke something. She picked up the prescription, which had been carelessly tossed on the counter in front of her, and studied it with a practiced eye. "Can I have your last name, Miss?"

"Last name?" Leela tilted her head sideways and rolled out the words' syllables.

She looked at the Doctor; so did the technician. The Doctor rose to the occasion by firing off a story of an infant baby girl being set adrift in a hat box on the Amazon river in a manner which would have put a semi-automatic rifle to shame.

Screwing up her courage, the technician plunged onward. "And your first name is spelled L-E-E-L-A."

Leela seemed to hesitate before answering positive.

"It means 'dark night' in Arabic," the Doctor interjected for no apparent reason.

The technician ignored him. "Date of birth?"

Before the Doctor could stop her, Leela fell to her knees, placed her hands together, and bowed her head, allowing her long brown hair to fall forward. She stared a half-singing/half-wailing chant: "I was born to the full moon when the flowing river Kugaara touched the great Ticana rocks on the twelfth night of our great pilgrimage to the fertile lands..." Quickly the Doctor dragged the protesting Leela to her feet before her dirge attracted a crowd.

Mr. Hensen cautiously approached him. "Are you sure she doesn't have brain damage?"

"Oh no," the Doctor grinned maniacally at the little man, "she's always been like this."

It was at this moment that the technician, who was not very brave to begin with, could no longer stand it. She didn't even want to hear about Leela's address and phone number. "That's all the information I need. I assume," she looked at Mr. Hensen, "you will be paying for these."

"Yes, of course," he agreed.

Just when the technician thought the worst was over, a number of low catcalls, barking, and other guttural sounds drifted her way. With an impending sense of doom, she turned to see four skinheads in all the Hell's Angels' glory approaching her. She shuddered at the sight. With their face and hair plastered with eye-piercing makeup and their wardrobe of black boots, bleached, ripped jeans, and white teeshirts with huge holes gouged, they looked utterly revolting.

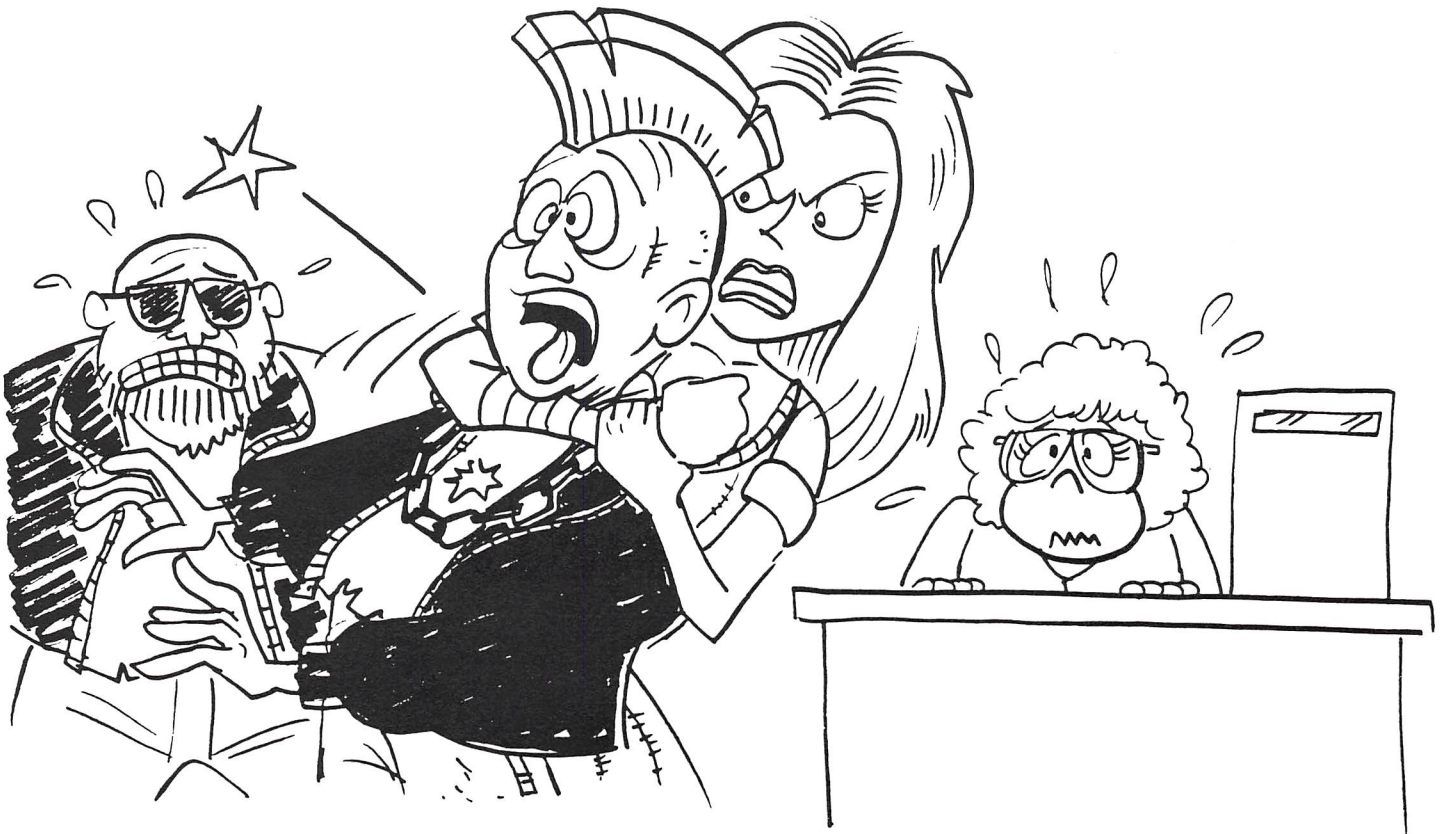
"Hey, check this out." The leader, identified by the most revolting mohawk (his hair seemed to be pasted with green and purple neon paint) ran his eyes up and down Leela in a very suggestive fashion. "You are one hot looking babe."

Leela was an unsophisticated woman to be sure, and maybe her civilized veneer could be stripped away from her by a gust of wind, but she knew a trashy comeon when she saw it. Haughtily she stuck her chin in the air. "I am Leela, warrior of the Sevateem. If you have any sense,"--her tone said she doubted it--"heed my warning and do not bother the Doctor." Her mentor waved a hand half-heartily to signify who she was talking about.

The head punk looked somewhat surprised. It was not a pretty sight. "Hey you," he snarled, effectively silencing the Doctor, who was trying to persuade Leela against a violent foray, "nobody, but nobody," he slapped his fingers into his chest, "tells me what I can do." He again snapped his fingers (the technician doubted he had the mental capacity to talk and snap his fingers at the same time) and simultaneously his fellow punks unhooked a length of shiny, thick chain from their belts and pulled it taut between their fingers.

"Got it?" He grabbed at Leela. If the punk had known anything about Leela, he would never have done that. In Leela's society such an action meant only one thing--a challenge to combat--and Leela responded appropriately.

"NO Leela!" the Doctor yelled, but was too late. Ignoring her injured arm, Leela jumped the surprised youth, capturing his neck in a hammerlock. Not truly expecting trouble, the other youths were rather sluggish in coming to his defense. One comrade grabbed at Leela's waist only to be sent sprawling backward by a swift kick. Another punk wrapped one end of a rusty chain around his wrist, leaving three-fourths of the chain dangling. He started to swing the chain windmill-style.





"Excuse me," the Doctor tapped him on the shoulder. "You're standing on my scarf," he said with his friendliest grin. When the punk predictably looked down, the Doctor yanked hard on his scarf, overbalancing the punk. In retaliation he jumped up from his heels and headed straight for the Doctor's head. With cobra-like speed two of the Doctor's fingers jabbed into his neck like a pronged fork, paralyzing the gang member in his tracks.

"It's amazing how much Venusian Aikido comes back to me in these types of situations," the Doctor said as he admired his handiwork. Meanwhile, the remaining youth still standing slammed his metal-encrusted fist into the Doctor's chin.

Leela was definitely in her natural element. She had taken hold of one of the punks by the scruff of his neck and was joyfully beating his head against a display rack. When she saw the Doctor spin by her, she dropped her victim and with a fierce "you shall pay!" outstretched her hands toward the Doctor's attacker. Much to her regret the punk, after knocking out the Doctor, turned to see his comrade's frozen, distorted face. This bizarre twist proved to be too much for him.

"Let's get outta here," he yelled as the gang members nearly bulldozed each other for the exit.

Instead of giving chase, Leela knelt beside the Doctor, who was sprawled across the floor in a drunken heap. Slowly he lifted his head and started to babble nonsensically: "I want my money back! The parachute didn't open."

"Doctor," she said softly. "It's all right." Leela's expression was of a mother bear protecting her cub. "They're gone. Do not be afraid. I will protect you."

The Doctor looked relieved. "Oh, thank Rassilon. Wait a minute. What do you mean by 'you'll protect me' rubbish," he said accusingly as he jumped to his feet. The Doctor made a fist. "I was doing a perfectly good job fighting them until..."

Leela cut him off. "Of course you were, Doctor," she said soothingly.

"Leela, I am in charge here and you are my assistant. I am the one who will do the protecting." The Doctor broke off abruptly and searched the room. He saw the now-unfrozen punk skulk out the door, but that wasn't the person he was looking for.

"I say, what happened to Mr. Hansen?"

"He left," the technician answered shakily. "Just like you're going to."

"Look," the Doctor shrugged apologetically. "This really wasn't our fault."

The technician ignored his lame attempt to placate her. "It's not bad enough I have to cater to AT&T commercial clones who don't know that the zero on a prescription label means there are no refills, who think nothing of calling us at 8:30 on a Wednesday night to have their non-refillable Valium prescription filled, or who act like they're going to die if we don't give them their high blood pressure which they haven't taken for two consecutive weeks."

"Now I have to put up with the Goddess of Mars coming in here picking fights with people who think being polite is saying 'have a nice day' after they stab you. I have had it." She grabbed the prescription bag from where the pharmacist had placed it and threw it at him. She then pointed at the door. "GET OUT!"

The Doctor started to protest, but one look at her set face changed his mind. Just as the duo walked out the telephone rang. Automatically the technician picked it up, only to wish she hadn't when a querulous voice began ranting in her ear. She rubbed her head; it was just one of those days.

LAST WORDS

Do a deal with you, now?
You can't be serious,
Or think I'm that much of a fool.
Oh yes, I may be mad--
But I'm not stupid.
Everything that mattered to me
Is lying dead around me.
What do you have left
With which to entice me?
That, yes, but it was never
That strong an inducement.
I hope you enjoyed all this,
That you found it satisfying
To break me, break my mind.
You knew I cared, that they
Mattered more than I knew.
Was that why you did it?
Because you couldn't understand
My accepting them while I
Always rejected you?
Don't bother answering,
I'm not that interested anymore.
I don't blame you for Terminal
...Well, not entirely;
I was at fault there,
Falling so neatly into your trap
Because of the promised "treasure".
Then you told me he was dead.
Do you know what that did to me?
Oh yes, why else would you have
Said it otherwise?
Was it the same sort of relish
You felt when I found out about
The truth of my Anna?
Then Cally...Vila...
Until it came to this.
Were you watching all the while,
Did it amuse you to see him die
With my name on his lips?
Was it pleasing to watch the
Others as they fell
Till there was only me?
There's nothing left, Servalan,
You've destroyed it all;
I've nothing more to lose...
Any last words?

THE DILEMMA

I've been called by many names;
Ghost-Killer, King of Swords
And many I have no wish to repeat.
I'm considered a hero by some,
And damned to Hell by others.

I've become a master of deception,
Able to fool even my fellow deadalive
Into thinking that I'm still one of the living.
A necessary skill I've had to learn
When I found that I still have a link.

But I'm tired of surviving,
Tired of killing my own kind,
Tired of living a mockery of life.
But the only way to end my existence
Is to kill you, my newfound son.

Even though I know that it has to be done,
I find that I can't do it.
You're an innocent in all this,
And I have no right to end your life
For the sole purpose of ending mine.

Your death would set me free
From this shadow of the life I once had.
But how can I commit murder,
The murder of my own son, no less,
Just to have the pleasure of dying?

Melissa Mastoris

TAKE A Quantum Leap OFF A SHORT TARDIS

CATHY BOLDREAU & HELEN WOOLVERTON

The feeling of flying through the eye of the storm washed over Sam once more. He was leaping again. There was no time to wonder where he would wind up--he was there.

"Oh, Jack--that's not how you change a diaper!"

She was short, dark and a little overweight. The baby, a boy, was possibly two months old. The room Sam found himself in was a gaily-decorated nursery, with the familiar figures of Pooh and Tigger, Big Bird and Kermit lining the walls. Feeling something squirming under his hands, he looked down at the chubby, gurgling baby he was currently attempting to diaper sideways. He said the first thing that leaped into his mind.

"Oh, Boy!"

"Yes, Jack, it's a boy," she rushed over to the hall closet for her coat. "You should know that by now. I've got to go to work, so keep your mind on the baby and try not to diaper the wrong end, okay?" A swift peck on the cheek and she ran out the door, grabbing her briefcase as she ran.

Ever since Dr. Sam Beckett began the Quantum Leap project and stepped prematurely into the project accelerator, he never knew where he was going to wind up--or as who. It made life exciting and, usually, a little frightening. At times like these Sam, quantum physicist extraordinary and holder of six doctorates, wished that he could remember the rudimentary elements of diapering he learned as a child. He finally finished changing the baby and began to explore the apartment, the baby nestled against his shoulder. He located the kitchen and rummaged through the refrigerator for a bottle. Straightening up, Sam found himself looking at his reflection on the gleaming steel fridge door. He thought he had gotten used to seeing the stranger in the mirror, but what he saw shocked him. This time he recognized the face.

"That's some famous kisser, isn't it?" Sam spun towards the voice, startling the baby, who began to cry. Al, his best friend and the project observer, was leaning nonchalantly against the wall, at least as far as a hologram could lean against a wall.

"What am I doing here? What am I doing in Jack Walker's body? I mean, this guy's one of the most famous rockers of all time...he had a great career."

"Not according to Ziggy. He says you're here to make sure Jack gets rediscovered and doesn't wind up as a househusband his whole life."

"But he did have a comeback. I remember it! He was more famous than the first time." Sam remembered the handsome singer/songwriter and the powerful career he had in the late seventies and early eighties. He also remembered the wife and small son who were always at his side. This baby he was caring for must be that little boy.

"According to Ziggy, Jack Walker missed his opportunity for the comeback. He was so into the househusband thing that he turned down an invitation to a party, so he wasn't there when the singer didn't show up and wasn't able to get up on stage to do his old act...all because he didn't want to leave the baby."

"This seems a pretty small reason to leap into someone's life. Just to make sure he has a comeback!" Sam turned, spotted a bottle and tested it on his wrist, and found it was cold. He grabbed the warmer he noticed next to the toaster on the counter, tried to juggle baby, bottle and warmer. "How do mothers manage with just two hands?"

"According to Ziggy there's a 98.325% chance that that's the reason for this leap." Al tapped several buttons on his hand-held computer relay, then slapped it on the side. "Yup, that's what he says."

"Great!" Sam thought. "I'm helping a singer make a comeback. No danger, no controversy, nothing! I could get used to this." He sat down and began feeding the baby.

Al leaned over and peered at the baby in Sam's arms. As if reading his friend's thoughts, he said, "Just think of this as a relax-a-leap."

* * * * *

"I don't believe it. I just don't believe it. Come on old girl, why are you giving me such trouble?"

A set of long legs encased in orange and tan striped trousers and a pair of high-top sneakers poked out from under a six-sided console. The legs belonged to a tall, blond man in a cricketing sweater. The worried look on his normally quiet face spoke volumes. He wiped his hands on a towel, gathered up his tools and headed for the door to the inner corridor.

"Hey, Doc, what's going on? Has the console gone flewey or something?" Tegan's sharp Australian twang rang out from the other side of the door.

The door opened quietly and a petite, aristocratic girl stepped through, followed by a taller, auburn-haired young woman. Nyssa, the younger of the two, was the sole survivor of Traken, the highly advanced, peaceful world destroyed during the battle with the Master which led to the Doctor's current regeneration, while Tegan was an air stewardess from 1980's Australia. Both had travelled with the Doctor for some time, sharing the Time Lord's adventures.

Both were worried now. They knew the TARDIS had been acting strangely for some time and that the Doctor was extremely concerned about the fact that the ship was acting more erratically than usual.

"There seems to be interference in the space/time continuum. It's almost as though someone is travelling on short, abrupt trips without being fully prepared for the jumps. It couldn't be another TARDIS, they're designed to travel within the continuum without disrupting it. Therefore, someone has developed the ability without the knowledge of exactly how to do it."

Tegan snorted, "Is that really all that bad, Doc? I mean, sometimes I wonder if you know how?"

"I assure you, Tegan, that there is a ship of some sort out there, leaping from place to place. And the pilot of that ship knows less about time travel than you do."

"Doctor, would the TARDIS' data banks be able to keep track of these disturbances?" Nyssa acted quickly to stop the brewing argument. "If it can, perhaps we can triangulate the coordinates and find the home base for this other ship." Nyssa began typing figures onto the console keyboard.

"Wonderful idea, Nyssa. See what you can find and I'll try to locate my star charts." The Doctor headed out the door in search of the proper storage room.

* * * * *

"Castellan Jorno, have you been able to locate the Doctor's TARDIS?" The woman who spoke was quite handsome, and her beautifully adorned robes indicated her rank of President of the High Council. She was the first woman to hold this office and took her responsibilities with the seriousness they deserved.

"Lady President, I am attempting to track him in the vortex but I cannot get a lock on his recall circuit. I have also been keeping track of these disturbances and they seem to take place in the Sol constellation in the Terran years 1900 through 2000. All of these disturbances directly affect the timelines they encounter." Jorno was a middle-aged (950 years old) Time Lord whose responsibilities included the security of the Citadel and the protection of the High Council. If they were concerned about these disruptions, then he would do everything in his power to calm their minds.

"I want you to keep track of the Master, the Rani and any other renegade Time Lords out there. If it's not the Doctor then it's got to be one of them. The people of Earth during that time period were simply not capable of time travel. I want a complete report to the High Council by this evening." President Flavia turned and left the room.

"Yes, Madam President." Jorno sighed. After all, what's another TARDIS or ten to keep track of?

"We've got our work cut out for us now, Damon. Let's start with the Master's TARDIS." Both Jorno and his assistant bent over the tracking console and began searching the endless centuries for the missing renegades.

* * * * *

Sam finished cleaning the apartment and was now in the laundry room, the wash in the spin cycle and the baby on the folding table, asleep in his rockerchair. He tried to remember everything he knew about Jack Walker's life. It was coming back to him slowly, the memories slipping back in bits and pieces. Once again, Sam cursed the swiss cheese memory the experiment left him with.

Behind him a door opened in the air and Al stepped through, computer link in hand and a Jack Walker song on his lips. He glanced up and spotted Sam.

"Her name is Anne, the baby is Max."

"Al, how long will I be here? I mean, when will this invitation come?"

"It's not that bad, is it? I mean, you make the beds, change the baby, do the shopping, clean the apartment...that's quite a change from being a quantum physicist..."

"Oh, great! Why is this so important? I mean, next to some of the things I've done in the past, this seems so small. I just don't get it."

"According to Ziggy, his career affects the lives of a lot of people who will benefit from his generosity. He becomes the new Geldof and organizes all sorts of charity events. He's your basic good guy type. You know...ah..sort of like Harry Chapin reborn. Besides, who could forget those great numbers he played? I remember Tina and I boogied all night to..."

"All right, Al. I'll accept the invitation. Just don't sing anything right now, you'll wake the baby."

"Ah, Sam, you never let me have any fun!"

* * * * *

"Doctor, I've triangulated the coordinates of those disturbances and they seem to center on Earth. Somewhere in the North American desert." Nyssa straightened from the console, holding a printout. "Somewhere between Los Angeles, California and Reno, Nevada around 1995."

"Right. That's where we're headed." The Doctor set the coordinates and the Time Rotor began its steady rise and fall.

* * * * *

Deep in the heart of the capital Citadel on Gallifrey, a group of people, their faces lost in shadows, sat around a small conference table.

"How is our agent doing?" The leader was a tall, solid figure.

"The project is going full speed ahead. By tomorrow morning, Earth time, this little error should be cleared up." The second figure looked up from a computer screen set into the table before him.

The first figure nodded his approval. "Excellent. Carry on."

* * * * *

The TARDIS materialized in the corner of a large, dimly-lit chamber. The room contained several panels of instrumentation and, in the center, a circle with a pulsating light shining down upon it. The TARDIS door opened slowly and the Doctor's head popped out.

"All's clear...how fascinating! This technology is utterly fascinating." The Doctor began a slow exploration of the chamber. "Reminds me a little of the Urbankan ship."

"These panels seem a little too advanced for this period in Earth's history." Nyssa examined a panel near the doorway into the room. "I thought that late 20th century technology couldn't even produce a functionally safe nuclear power plant, yet this appears to be some sort of accelerator chamber."

"You're right, Nyssa. These panels are almost up to Gallifreyan standards. I wonder what this is." The Doctor peered at one rainbow-colored display.

"Looks rather spooky to me." Tegan's voice, intruding suddenly into their examination of the panels, caused both the Doctor and Nyssa to jump. "I mean, it's almost as bad as Frankenstein's laboratory."

A man stepped through the door and began taking readings from the various terminals and dials, feeding the information into a small, hand-held computer link. As he reached the TARDIS, the technician began absent-mindedly searching it for the VDTs he knew were normally on that wall. He turned, making note of the missing terminals on his computer link, and noticed the Doctor and the girls, who were busily looking for a place to hide in the smooth-sided room.

"Hi there, are you three new to the team? I don't remember the Admiral talking about new staff. You should have been issued I.D. badges. Still, not my department. Funny, I don't remember that box either." He stopped and scratched his head. "Could have sworn the timeline readout terminal was in that corner."

"Timeline readout? Would you mind telling me about it?"

"Have to ask the Admiral about that. Should have been part of your orientation. Say...you are a part of the project, aren't you?"

"Why, yes," the Doctor approached the technician, hand outstretched, "we've only just arrived and took the opportunity to look around before orientation."

"Well, I guess that's okay then. As I said, not my department." The technician placed the computer link in his pocket and headed for the door. "What are your specialties? I'm an expert in mathematics. Name's Croyden."

"I'm an expert in just about everything," replied the Doctor quite honestly. "Nyssa is an expert in bioengineering and robotics and Tegan is an expert in..well.."

"Watch it, Doctor," Tegan muttered under her breath. She approached the technician. "I'm an expert in aviation."

"Well then, I guess Dr. Beckett will be happy to have you all on the team and keeping track of him. Orientation is this way."

The Doctor looked at his two companions and shrugged. They followed the technician down the corridor towards whatever awaited them.

* * * * *

"Madame President, members of the High Council, I have narrowed the field of search to the constellation Sol in the Milky Way galaxy." The Castellan's hands were shaking ever so slightly and the print-out in his hands rattled. "We will continue to examine the evidence in the hopes of zeroing in when the next disturbance occurs."

"Come, come now Castellan. Surely there is only one planet in that constellation which is capable of supporting a species with the ability to create a time-travelling mechanism. Narrow your field of search to Earth." Lord Chancellor Pandrum appeared quite intimidating to the Castellan. He was a large man, made to look larger by the ceremonial robes of his office. "Honestly, you obviously have not had the proper schooling. If you had, you would have known that immediately."

"Forgive me, Lord Chancellor. We did not wish to rule out the possibility that the Martians may have developed a bit faster than we expected."

"The Castellan is correct, Lord Chancellor. With several renegades running around, there is not telling if one of our own people may be helping them develop faster. It would fit the patterns of both the Master and the Rani." President Flavia was not willing to allow anyone on the High Council to badger the Castellan, who was secretly one of her favorites among the support staff. "Castellan, please return to your duties and let us know as soon as you have discovered anything else. This meeting is adjourned."

* * * * *

"Admiral, this is Dr. John Smith, and Nyssa and Tegan Jovanka. They're the new recruits for the team. Doctor, ladies--meet Admiral Albert Calavicci."

"Pleased to meet you folks. Welcome aboard." Al turned from the computer terminal he was working at, extending his hand towards the newcomers, and stopped short, a shocked look upon his face.

The Doctor also stopped, hand outstretched, the color draining from his face.

The two men stared at each other in silence, the various emotions both were going through clearly evident in their eyes, the set of their jaws, and the tightening of their mouths. The tension in the atmosphere was so thick that Tegan and Nyssa instinctively stepped closer together.

The tableau was broken by another technician coming through the door. "Admiral, you're needed in the acceleration room immediately. We've found a strange blue box and we thought you might want to take a look at it."

"I already know it's there. An English police box, battered, chipped paint, cracked glass. This gentleman is the owner."

"It's been a long time, 'Admiral'," the Doctor looked at the other man with undisguised contempt. "I thought you were above this type of meddling. It's the sort of thing the Master would do."

"Don't get me wrong, Doctor. After all, you don't know what goes on around there. A lot of good is being done, a lot of lives are being saved. This experiment actually gives happiness to innumerable people." Al waved his cigar airily.

"Nevertheless, it's got to be stopped. You can't simply take some poor, unfortunate human and send him flitting willy-nilly through time like this."

"Doctor, you can't stop this project." Al surreptitiously reached for the panic button under his desk. "There's too much at stake here. Sam knew more or less what he was getting into when he began this project, and he enjoys the difference he's making in people's lives. Besides, it's his project--not mine. I'm just

the project observer, after all. Now, if you want to join us, you're more than welcome. If you don't--well then, that can be taken care of too." Al waived his cigar in the general direction of the Doctor. "Take the Doctor somewhere where he can think things over. Leave the girls here, I want to talk to them."

Two pairs of strong hands grabbed the struggling Doctor and began to drag him from the room. "You won't get away with this! The High Council won't allow this to continue...You're disrupting Time itself!"

The girls stepped forward, only to find their way barred by a third security guard. Al looked up, an appreciative gleam in his eyes as he noticed Tegan's tube top and shorts outfit and Nyssa's body-hugging pants outfit. He moved to the front of his desk and, sitting on the edge, waved the girls to a couple of chairs opposite his desk. "Now ladies, tell me how long you've been with the Doctor."

* * * * *

"Jack, come to bed. I've got to get up early to get to work."

Sam poked his head around the bedroom door and smiled at the woman on the bed. Once again he thought that this was the hardest part of being in someone else's life--getting into bed with their wives. At least he hadn't leaped into a woman again--he didn't think he could handle getting into bed with a husband.

"Be right there."

She was quite pretty, really. Not in the conventional sense, like Loni Anderson or Michelle Pfeiffer, but she shone with an inner peace and health. Her nose was a little too large, her lips a little too wide, but her eyes were what attracted you to her face. They were large, hazel and set wide apart. They seemed to drink you in and look right through you at the same time. Her body was a little too plump by the day's standards and she was a little too short, but she made Sam feel right at home. It was hard to remember that she belonged to Jack Walker. Sam almost didn't want to leap.

He placed the towel back on the rack and headed towards the bed. On the way he bumped into the desk and his pyjama top caught the edge of her briefcase, knocking it to the floor. He scrambled around, picking up letters, pens, everything that fell out. "I'm sorry! I didn't mean..."

She was beside him, helping him, making small shushing sounds. Both reached for the envelope at the same time, their hands touching. He looked into her eyes and she grabbed the envelope.

"What's that?"

"It's nothing...just a letter."

"Come on, Anne, what is it...what's wrong?"

"It's nothing. It's just an invitation to a party. For Gloria Graham. I'm sending my assistant."

Sam reached for the envelope and took it from her.

"Look, it's no big deal. All the label wants is a representative. Carole can do just as well. Besides, you hate these things."

"They want you there, don't they?" Sam knew this was the invitation he had been waiting for. "Then we'll go."

"But Jack, we can't take Max. And you'd never hire a babysitter. Look, we've worked this out already. It's okay."

"But I want to go. Look, I'll hire a babysitter, don't worry. Just get yourself a new dress. We can enjoy ourselves for a change."

Sam took her by the hand and led her to the bed. He climbed into bed and pulled the covers over himself. She snuggled up to him, holding him around the waist and resting her head on his chest.

"Jack," her voice was slightly slurred by fatigue, which made it quite sexy, "are you sure? You can still back out. Besides, it's for Tuesday." She ran her hand lazily along his chest.

"I really want to go. Besides, the invitation says it's for Gloria Graham and I love her work."

"Thank you, Jack. I promise I'll make it up to you." She kissed him, braking it for a yawn. "I'm sorry, but I'm beat."

As she drifted off to sleep, Sam lay staring at the ceiling. Was this it? Would he now leap into someone else's life, or would he still be here for Tuesday's party? Gloria Graham was a favorite actress of Sam's. When he was a child he would watch her movies for hours; now he might actually get the chance to meet her. He slipped into slumber with that thought on his mind.

* * * * *

The gathering reconvened in the hidden chamber. Those who sat around the table were quite concerned with this new turn of events and scrambled to control the damage.

"The Doctor has arrived at the project. Our agent separated him from his companions and is attempting to convince him to leave without interfering. He will keep us advised of all developments." The second figure hovered over the computer terminal, studying the transmissions flashing across the screen.

"The Doctor has a long-standing desire to see us disbanded. He has never been able to forgive us for using him in the past. He must be stopped this time, no matter what." The threat was clearly evident. The first figure spoke with all the authority of his position.

"That's going a bit far. I fully believe that if the Doctor is made aware of why we are doing this, he will understand and possibly even approve," the third figure nervously offered.

"We are discussing the Doctor, aren't we?" A fourth shadowy figure spoke. "The same man who gave us such trouble when we asked him to help destroy the Daleks at their creation? The same man who said Daleks will actually help the development of the universe? I don't think he can be persuaded to go along with us."

"Then he must not be allowed to get in our way." The leader once again took command. "Tell our agent to do what he must to insure the success of the project."

* * * * *

The Doctor stood at the office window, looking out over the vast panorama. Off to the right he saw two prairie dogs scavenging among the trash heap. To the left, the buttes were changing to various brilliant earthy hues with the setting sun. He once again examined the edges of the window and wished for the hundredth time that he still had his sonic screwdriver, or at least had made a new one. After all, Romana had left the blueprints and they were somewhere in the TARDIS. Oh well, 20/20 hindsight was a wonderful thing.

"Enjoying the view, Doctor?" Al stood in the doorway, his ever-present cigar dangling between his fingers.

The Doctor had not heard him unlock the door and did his best to hide his surprise. "It's quite beautiful. Was the desert your choice, or was the location decided upon to secure privacy?"

"Actually, Sam's from the farm belt and wanted a little sunshine for a bit longer per year. Anyway, that's not important. I want to show you around the facility and then we can talk some more."

"Where are Tegan and Nyssa?"

"They're getting something to eat and will join us on the tour."

"Then let's get started."

* * * * *

"Jack, don't forget to drop your tux off at the cleaners--you'll need it Tuesday." Anne placed her dishes in the sink and started for the door. "And don't forget, we need milk and butter."

"I won't forget."

Sam bent down and took the baby from the rocker seat as Anne rushed back and grabbed him for a big kiss. "Sorry about last night, Jack. I was just so tired. I'll make it up to you tonight." She ran out the door and he heard it bang behind her.

Sam looked to heaven and passed up a silent prayer that she'd be too tired again tonight. "Well, Max, let's go look for that tux." Sam left the kitchen and headed for the bedroom.

* * * * *

"Castellan, what progress have you made?"

President Flavia swept into the room followed by an entourage of High Councilors. The Castellan looked up from his station at their arrival, straightened and held his lower back. He hadn't realized just how long he'd been leaning over the display.

"There has been no movement in the space/time continuum for the past 24 hours. Whoever or whatever is causing these disturbances has not moved from wherever he, she or it is."

"Lady President, the Castellan is simply attempting to stall us. If he could actually do his job he would be able to find this phantom timeship. Obviously, he cannot. Perhaps it is time to change Castellans again."

"Chancellor Pandrum! Kindly keep your opinions to yourself. If the Castellan cannot find the timeship, then the timeship obviously cannot be traced. I do not doubt the Castellan's abilities, nor do I find your verbal assaults pleasing. If they continue, then perhaps it is time to elect a new Chancellor."

The tall young man in the corner stood abruptly, motioning for the Castellan to come over.

"Forgive me, Castellan, Lady President, Chancellor, but my scanner has picked up something unusual on the planet Earth."

The Castellan hurried over to his assistant's desk. "What have you found, Damon?"

Damon pointed to a steady blip on the scanner in front of him. The Castellan reached over and typed a sequence of numbers on the keypad beside the scanner. A print-out appeared on the screen below the blip.

"Artron energy!" The Castellan turned to his visitors and pointed to the scanner. "It appears to be artron energy and it's coming from Earth. I think we've located the source of those disturbances."

"Check your readings and keep the Council informed. Good work, Castellan. And Damon." President Flavia left the room, her entourage behind her.

* * * * *

"And over here is the project accelerator...that's where you materialized." Al conducted the Doctor into the vast chamber where he and his companions first encountered the technician. "As you can see, it's quite impressive."

"Do they know who they're dealing with...do they know what you are?" The Doctor was still dazed and angry at finding out his old friend was in charge of this project. "And do you know what havoc you're causing out there? You're causing ripples in the continuum and they're getting larger."

"Doctor, we've known each other for a very long time. This project's just another version of what you've been doing."

"But I'm not using an innocent person to do my work. I'm out there, putting myself in jeopardy, not allowing someone else to get hurt."

"Don't give me that, Doctor. After all, what about Katarina, or Sara Kingdom, or Adric? They laid their lives down for you. I'm not asking Sam to do that."

"I never asked them to die for me! I never asked anyone to die for me! You have no right to throw them in my face." The Doctor's anger and pain at the recent loss of his companion, Adric, was written across his face.

"You're right, I'm sorry. Look, this whole project was originally Sam's idea. He's the one with the theory, I'm just the one with the know-how. Anyway, Sam's not in life-threatening situations...at least not usually."

The Doctor glared at Al, still angry and hurt over the other's caustic remarks. "Where are Nyssa and Tegan?"

"Here we are, Doctor." Nyssa and Tegan walked into the room, followed by the technician who originally brought them to Al. "We've been given a guided tour."

"Nyssa really enjoyed it, too." Tegan's sarcasm was lost on the Doctor, but not on Al, whose ideal woman had beauty and brains. He smiled and turned to his audience.

"Shall we finish the tour, Doctor? There's a somewhat supercilious computer I'd like you to meet." Al led them out of the chamber, muttering under his breath, "You two deserve each other."

* * * * *

In an office in the Capital Citadel, several figures met.

"The Castellan must be stopped. His interference here will only make the job more difficult." The second member of the secret group stood against the office door, effectively blocking entry into the room.

"It's bad enough we have to find a way to deal with the Doctor. I don't want to have another problem here on Gallifrey." The group leader paced up and down, barely restraining his anger.

"We cannot do anything to the Castellan or his assistant. We must concentrate all our energies on the Doctor. If we can win his approval, then he can help us win over the High Council." The fourth figure from the meetings sat in a chair by the desk, attempting to interject some calm into the proceedings.

The leader stopped before the fourth member. "Contact our agent."

* * * * *

They were still in the accelerator chamber, Al explaining the function of the various instruments and the basis of the project, when a secretary poked her head in the door.

"Admiral, there's a call for you. It's Professor Omega, and he insists on talking to you right now."

"I'll take it in my office. Please take over the tour."

Al left the room and, hurrying to his office, picked up the phone.

"Yes, Dr. Omega...Yes...he's being given a tour right now...yes, I know what to do...No, I won't...I WON'T! Look, if you want that, then I'm out of here...I'll pull Sam back and leave if you...no...I've known the Doctor for some time, I'm sure I can convince him...No, I won't..." Al sat clutching the phone in one hand, the other rubbing his forehead where the veins were beginning to throb. "Look, I'm telling you I can handle him. After all, I've known him since...No!" Al's fist slammed down on the desk, yet he did not feel it. "You can't ask me to do that...I'll talk to him...yes, I'll keep you informed...goodbye!"

Al hung the phone up and sat down at his desk, burying his face in his hands.

* * * * *

Sam pushed the shopping cart down the vegetable aisle, his mind half on the baby and half on the grocery list in his hand. Max fidgeted in the rocker seat.

"Excuse me, but aren't you Jack Walker? Oh, wow! I don't believe it. Right here in the A & P, Jack Walker! And you do your own grocery shopping!"

The young woman stood there, gaping at Sam and gushing. Sam looked for a place to hide...any place. But there was none. A small crowd was gathering.

"Well, I'm afraid someone has to do the shopping. And this store is so convenient. Besides, why is it surprising that I do the grocery shopping? A number of men do..." Sam's voice trailed off.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to embarrass you, but I've been a fan for so many years...not that you're that old, but that I'm so young, and..." Sam watched as the young woman got more flustered.

"I've been in the business since I was very young. I wouldn't worry about it." Sam started to push his cart further down the aisle, but the girl followed him.

"I really must look like an idiot. You see, I've never met a celebrity before. And I certainly never expected to meet one in my local supermarket."

"That's okay. I've sort of gotten used to people being surprised to see me." Oh boy, have I, Sam thought.

"May I have your autograph?"

"Of course. And don't worry, it's all okay." As he sighed Jack Walker's name, Sam Beckett wondered how much longer it was 'till Tuesday.

* * * * *

Al rejoined the Doctor and his companions in the cafeteria, where they were seated at a table, drinking coffee and listening to a technician discuss the computer, Ziggy.

"Uh, Doctor, can I speak with you?"

The Doctor looked up and noticed Al's discomfort. "Of course, shall we go back to your office?" As he got up from the table, the Doctor handed Tegan the key to the TARDIS. "In case you need anything," he whispered, and left the room a little behind Al.

As they walked to the main office, Al's hands began to open and close spasmodically. He chewed on the large cigar clamped between his teeth. A thin sheen of sweat shone on his forehead. His hearts were beating wildly, a perfect syncopated ragtime. In the back of his mind it reminded him of the time he had met Scott Joplin.

They reached the office and Al ushered the Doctor in, waving him to a chair and sitting on the corner of the desk.

"I've just received a phone call from the home office. I'm under instructions to stop you from interfering in this project..."

"The C.I.A. threatened you." The Doctor's contempt was evident in his voice.

"It's not like that. Look, I left Gallifrey for most of the same reasons you did. I mean, I felt I could do some good. I couldn't tolerate being cooped up, doing nothing but studying different cultures all the time. I wanted to do more with my lives. So I came here and tried to live like they do. I think that's what kept me sane in Vietnam. I mean, I was used to vegetating, being forced to watch life go on like some intergalactic voyeur.

"A few years ago I met Sam. He's got all sorts of degrees...really smart. We discovered a common interest in Quantum physics and discussed his idea for this project. He had most of the concept down pat, he just needed a little help. I just didn't know how to pull it off without giving myself away. That's when I

was approached by the C.I.A. They'd kept track of me after I'd left and decided to help me help Sam make this plan of his a reality. They'd provide the names of people with the knowhow, and I could right some wrongs. I could help. Like you, I could do something."

"But instead they perverted it. They took over the project, Ziggy, everything."

Al nodded, looking at the soggy remains of a cigar butt. "Even, to an extent, me."

The door to the office opened and Tegan and Nyssa stepped in, followed by a small, balding man. He took one look at the Doctor and began to sidle out of the room, only to find himself pulled up short by two hands gripping his arms.

"So you let them take over the project." The Doctor began to pace up and down the room, oblivious to everyone but the person seated on the desk. "Who is in charge these days, not that they ever told me."

Al remained seated, not answering the Doctor, not even able to look at him. He found himself wishing his friend would shut up. Didn't he know that he had to be stopped, that he couldn't be allowed to interfere? Al felt like he was drowning in the turmoil of emotions he was feeling. He didn't want to hurt his friend, but his instructions were clear: gain the Doctor's help, or eliminate him.

"I can't believe that you would allow yourself to get this deeply involved with a group which takes innocent people and drops them into dangerous situations without any prior warning. I've nearly lost my lives because of them."

"I know."

Al toyed with a large paperweight, weighing it, stroking it with his thumb, all the time keeping an eye on the Doctor. He knew what he had to do; the Doctor had to be stopped. Slowly he began inching his way off the desk, paperweight in hand.

The Doctor stood at the window, his back to the room. He didn't see Al quietly slip up behind him and raise the paperweight.

* * * * *

The delegation of High Councilors once again met in the main control room.

"We have isolated the source of the artron energy. It is a TARDIS located on Earth. A sensor check of the TARDIS' systems indicate that it has no recall circuit. We can also tell that this is a recent alteration."

The Castellan stood once more before the High Council. He felt tired, drained of all emotion. He knew that the information he had to impart was not what the Council wanted to hear. He took a deep breath and continued.

"We have also located two other sources of artron energy. One is another TARDIS; an older model with a recall circuit. The other source is unknown."

"With at least TARDISes in one location, we must consider the possibility that Earth is once again a battleground. We must act now, before any damage is done." Flavia approached the Castellan, hand outstretched. "Please give me the coordinates."

"I cannot, Madame President. As I stated, the first TARDIS was recently modified. My assistant, Damon, has informed me that he gave the Doctor a component without a recall circuit when he was here during the Omega problem. That was several years ago. Therefore, the Doctor on Earth is from a past point in our timestream. He has not yet entered the Death Zone, he has not yet handed over the reins of the Presidency to you; therefore, we cannot interfere without putting our own timelines in jeopardy."

Flavia stepped back and searched the faces of the council for some indication of what to do. The other councilors stood mute--too stunned to react.

"Forgive me, Madame President, but the Doctor is on his own."

* * * * *

Everything happened in a blur. Tegan, Nyssa, and the technician all leapt forward at the same time Al brought the paperweight down with all his strength and the Doctor whirled around and grabbed his wrist. The five crashed to the ground, the paperweight skidding across the floor. The Doctor rose, one hand holding Al by the collar, the other the small technician.

"Leggo, gov. You're gonna damage the suit."

"Sit down, but of you! What is going on here? Al, you're going to tell me whether you want to or not. Don't move, Drax."

Tegan grabbed the technician and pushed him into a chair. Nyssa retrieved the paperweight and handed it to the Doctor.

"Drax, since Al here has been dancing around the subject all day, perhaps you'd better start talking."

"It's quite simple, innit? Shortly after you left Atrios, I got a contract to help build a himmagin' chamber and quantum hexelerator and I grabbed it. Then I got a contract to help keep it runnin'. I mean, this here's my specialty, innit? Keepin' complicated stuff runnin'. Anyway, I'm paid good, got a good place to live, a workroom and the freedom to take other contracts durin' the hexperiment. Can't ask for more, Theta."

The Doctor winced at the use of his old school name. He had thought he had straightened out that little problem the last time he'd encountered Drax. But the little man's sprightly nature was unstoppable. "Drax is right; he's only the hired help. The C.I.A. got me in touch with him and provided the artron generator used to keep Ziggy going. Their only stipulation is that they control Sam's leaps."

"And you allowed them to do that. You've corrupted your experiment by allowing them to destroy what could have been a study in quantum science. Al, you've forgotten the first rule of being a renegade--never let the Time Lords interfere."

"It's not just them, Doctor."

"You've allowed others to become involved! Who?"

"As I explained, these experiments set things right. They alter time for the good. There are some things I wish I could change, like talking Sam into keeping Francis Gary Powers from flying that mission, or maybe saving my marriage, but we've really helped make the world better. We helped a nun build a chapel which gives aid to numerous homeless; we've helped a priest put a murdered in jail and save a small boy; we've..."

"All right! You've done a lot of good, but what about the people whose lives have been changed? These things were not meant to happen. You've corrupted these timestreams directly and countless others indirectly. And you still haven't told me who this other group is."

"One you've worked with yourself, And done so quite freely. Doctor, I'm fighting the forces of darkness. And yes, I can't tell Sam; the concept is too horrific for a human. Even one as brilliant as he is. How do I tell him that he's being used by the..."

"White Guardian," the Doctor interjected.

"The White Guardian. Sam's already met the Black Guardian--disguised as me, if you believe it. Boy, has he got nerve. Fortunately, Sam survived that little incident with no clear memories."

The Doctor's innate curiosity began to get the better of him. "Does the C.I.A. know of this involvement?"

"Yes. Well, at least their leader does. So you see, you can't interfere. These people Sam helps directly affect the future. Their descendants will be the leaders of Earth during the Draconian wars, during the invasion of the Daleks. And they'll exist because of Sam. You can't risk stopping that."

"Doctor, is he talking about God and the devil?" Tegan lightly touched the Doctor's sleeve, searched his eyes with hers for an answer.

The Doctor turned to his companion, resigned to the fact that there was no way he could stop the project.

"Yes, Tegan. That's what he's talking about. Good and evil, God and the devil, yin and yang, light and dark."

"Doctor, perhaps he's lying. After all, he's not been exactly honest before." Nyssa's comment made Al glance at her with a wounded expression.

"No, Nyssa. I've known Al far too long not to know when he's lying. He's right, I can't interfere."

"You've welcome to join us, Doctor. We could use your knowledge of the Black Guardian to help figure out..."

"No. But remember, I'll be keeping my eye on your little project, and if anything goes wrong, I'll be here. Remember that."

"Then this is goodbye. Doctor, there are so few of us out here, away from Gallifrey, that we should stay in touch. Please..."

The Doctor sadly shook his hand. "Goodbye, old friend. I've missed you. Take care of yourself. And Sam. And you, Drax, I've got an old score to settle with you." He grabbed the technician by the collar and began marching him out of the room. "Remember that last meeting on Zeos? I've waited a long time to discuss it with you..."

"May I escort you to your TARDIS, ladies?" They headed for the door. "Listen, are you sure you want to stay with the Doctor? There's plenty of room for you here, and I could sure use a bioengineer and a stewardess."

* * * * *

President Flavia sat down in her chair in the Council chambers, looking down on the leader of that secret organization known as the C.I.A.

"Your agent has reported that the Doctor has left Earth, Lord Chancellor. He is not happy but has agreed to stay away."

"Excellent. I apologize for this little disruption, Madame President, but the C.I.A. can't allow anyone to interfere. This operation is too important."

"I allow the C.I.A. to exist unmolested, Chancellor, but when innocent travellers are put at risk, you must answer to me."

"The Doctor is hardly an innocent traveller, Madame President."

"Nevertheless, your actions will be dealt with."

* * * * *

Sam was having the time of his life. He had actually gotten a chance to meet Gloria Graham. He had actually gotten to talk to her, hold her hand, share dinner with her. And now he was chatting with some of movie and music's brightest and best performers, but all he could think of was the past few days, remember the fans in the supermarkets, the parks, the cleaners. He looked over at Anne, talking shop with a label executive, and felt pride swelling in his heart. She looked so beautiful.

A light tap on his shoulder brought Sam back to Earth.

"Jack, we have a problem. Our singer didn't show up. Could I impose on you to do a set? Look, I know you're not prepared, but we're really in a jam."

Sam looked at his beleaguered host and smiled. This was, after all, why he was here. "No problem. Just give me a second."

As Sam stepped up to the mike, he reflected on the last few days. It was a leap seemingly designed to educate him about the foibles of stardom. The drummer beat out a staccato rhythm; Sam grabbed the mike, opened his mouth, and...

The feeling washed over him once more. He felt himself buffeted by the ebb and flow of time, flying through clouds and stars. Twisting through infinity. When it stopped, he opened his eyes. The first thing he saw was a large group of Indians running towards him. He looked down and saw he was wearing a cavalry uniform. In front of him was a movie camera.

The director leaned back in his chair, raised the bullhorn to his lips and shouted, "Action!"

"Oh Boy!"

eyes dark as coal
the eyes that once laughed
now only leave me cold.

lips fine as crystal
the lips that once kissed mine
now only turn away.

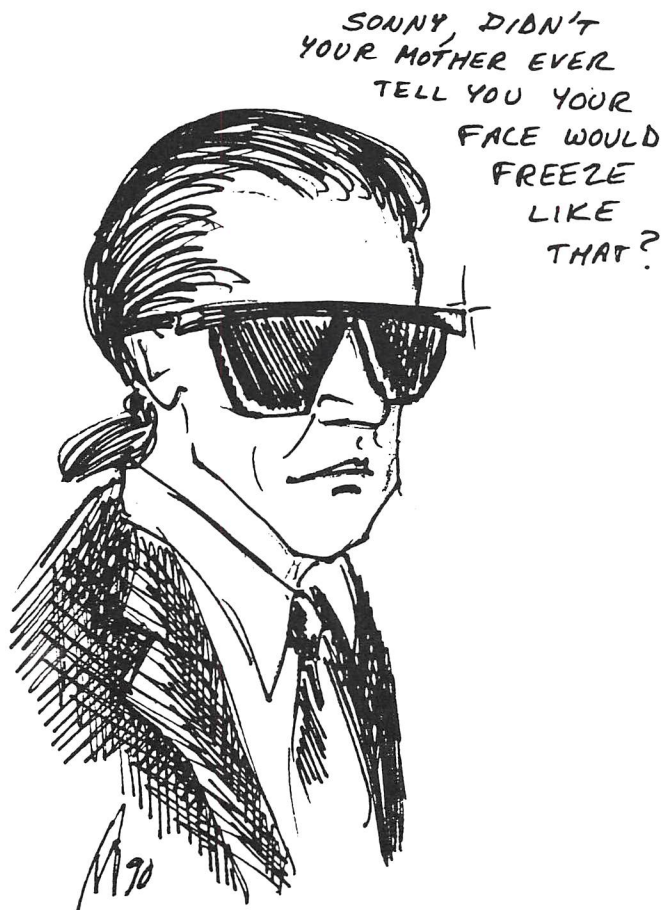
hands sure as rain
the hands that touched me
tender as silk
now leave me bruised.

legs strong as steel
the legs that once entwined with mine
now just walk away

words sweet as honey
the words that could warm my very soul
now only hurt.

THIS 'N THAT

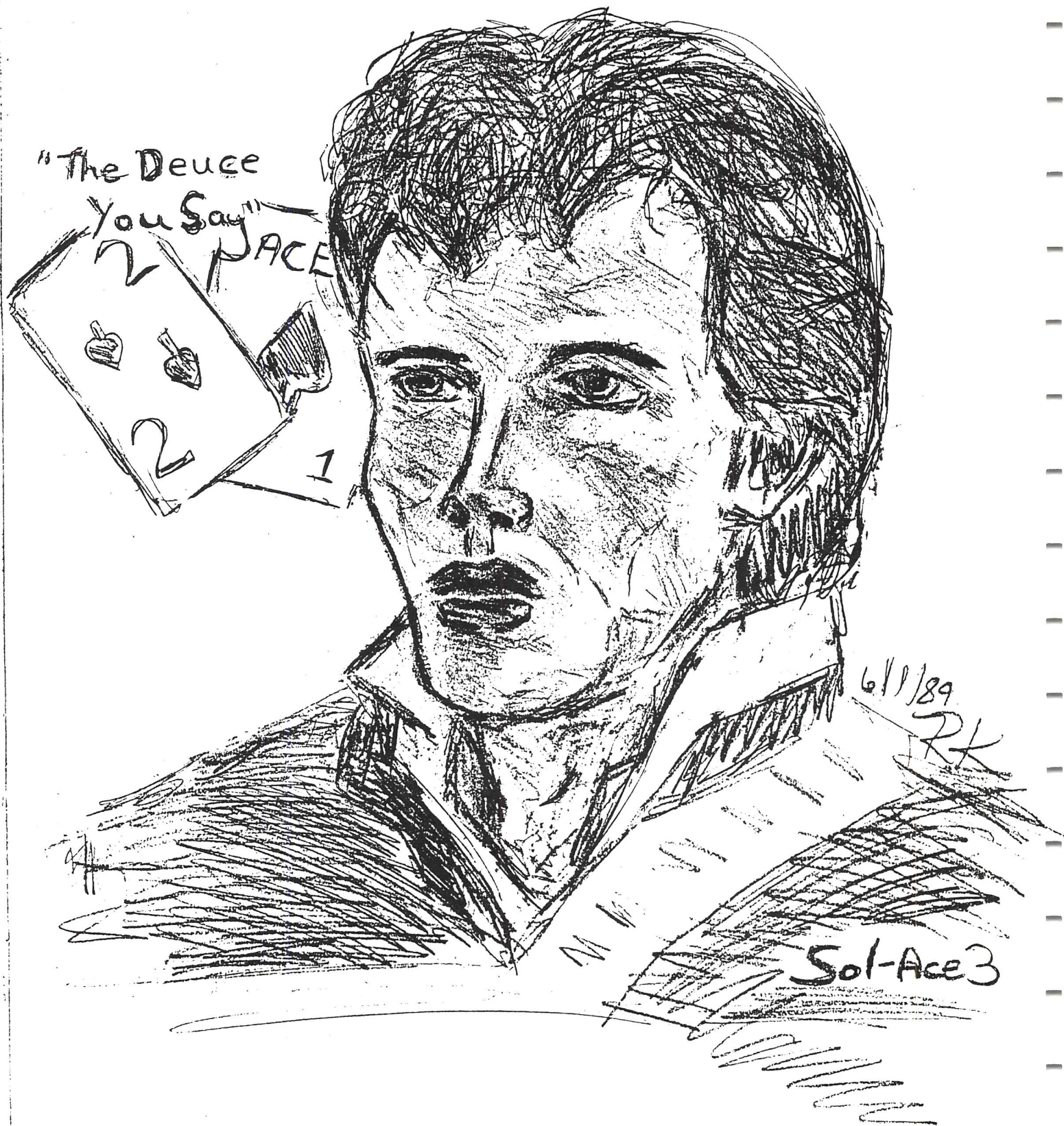
Also known as: WHAT THE #\$%#\$% DO I DO WITH ALL THIS ARTWORK PEOPLE HAVE SENT ME????? Rachel Kadushin, Adrian Morgan and Leah Rosenthal take a peek at other genres we have known and loved....



Christine didn't understand!
No one understood me-- except you.
YOU will sing my music of the
night!!



Leah Rosenthal





a joke told with 'Frequency'
(part 1)

In a development tragic to
romantics everywhere,
Sam Wheat runs afoul of
the Ghostbusters...





SISTERHOOD OF KARN
(to Fleetwood Mac's "Sister of the Moon")
by Roxie Ray

Devout women working magic charms
Orange robes swirling
Sisterhood of Karn

In their sacred temple cave
by dim torchlight
performing the ritual for
the Elixir of Life

Heady sensation
Immortality
Reverent guardians of the Flame
keep it from harm

They live quite simply
using their great minds
Rejecting earthly possessions
defying time lines

The High One they obey her
she leads them right or wrong
Mysterious are the sisters
sisters, Sisterhood of Karn

Misunderstood Sisterhood of Karn
creates illusions with superior brains
Dancing intricate patterns
Can anyone guess their aim



A Memory

Eric Hoffman

art by Nora Mai

"I should never have taken her to that Senso-Rock concert!" the Doctor muttered to himself as he hung up his umbrella on the coat rack in his quarters.

He had just come back from a session in the plant room (which was the size of a good-sized greenhouse), giving the greenery a watering from the special sprinkler system he had installed at Mel's insistence ("Nothing like fresh vegetables to keep you healthy! Lots of vitamins!" she had enthused). There were times when she could be incredibly annoying in her fitness fetish, but on this particular matter, she had been right on the mark. Especially since he had added some special greens from Tetranus III, which were considered a special dining delicacy.

They were almost ready for harvesting. The Doctor's anticipation of a meal built around those leaves that had the texture and flavor of steak already had his mouth watering. He could hardly wait to try out some of the recipes for salads built around the leaves that had been running rampant through his mind.

The Doctor knew that any one of them would be an inspiration to the palate. As well as probably having Ace devouring his creation as if she hadn't eaten for weeks.

His mood, however was interrupted upon encountering Ace, wandering through the TARDIS corridors, her arms wrapped around a holographic 'painting' that the Doctor had surprised her with at the Senso-Rock concert. While such music was really not his style (a good jazz combo, 50's rock group or a big band was more to his taste), he knew that Ace would probably enjoy it.

Besides, one of the most seldom-heard-live bands, Disaster Area, would be performing and the Doctor was curious as to how the concert's promoters planned to cope with the dangers that had made 'The Plutonium Rock Band' one of the most popular and **most feared** groups in the known Universe.

But it was another group entirely that had caught Ace's fancy. Or rather, its leader, a good-looking young man who made the Doctor think of a cross between Conan the Barbarian and John-Boy of the Waltons. He had actually possessed a pretty good voice. At least what the Doctor had heard of it through the sonic/seismic ear-plugs he had been wearing against the music's decibel level plus the shrieking sound of fans, both humanoid and not.

As soon as Ace had gotten one look at 'Moonstar', as he was billed, she seemed to go into a slack-jawed trance, watching him go through his numbers in a manner that soon had her bouncing up and down in her seat, screaming, shouting and generally behaving like a teenager (which she was) whose hormones had been sent into a chain-reaction by a cyclotron.

When the concert ended and the Doctor had removed his earplugs, Ace had looked at him with an expression that made her look as if she had been hit by a pacifying dart.

"Professor," she said, a hungry tone in her voice, "Isn't he a blast? Can I have him for Christmas?"

"I don't know, Ace," the Doctor replied, an amused grin on his face as he pointed towards the stage. "I think those young ladies might have something to say about it."

Following the direction indicated by the Doctor, Ace saw the man of her dreams mobbed by an avalanche of attractive female fans. And loving every minute of it.

"Yeah, I see what you mean, Professor," she said quietly, a sad look on her face. "Well, that was great. Thanks for the treat. Maybe we'd better get back to the TARDIS."

Puppy love, the Doctor thought to himself. Or is that Puppy lust? Hard to tell between the two when you came right down to it. What to do, what to do, he wondered.

A partial answer came when he spotted one of the many souvenir hucksters common to such events. Moments later, Ace was shrieking with delight as the Doctor presented her with a 22 x 28 holographic 'painting'/poster of 'Moonstar'. As they walked back to the TARDIS, Ace had hugged the thing to her chest as if it were a lover. When somebody had asked to see it, curious as to what had the girl so blissed-out, the Doctor's eyebrows had gone up as Ace had suddenly snarled, "Mine! Hands off! Mine!" and stalked off.

"Good heavens, she has got it bad, hasn't she?" he chuckled to himself.

Any hope of Ace getting over her infatuation with the rock singer had dimmed as she remained as attached

as ever to Moonstar's picture. Something was bound to happen and there was no way that the Doctor was going to give in to Ace's periodic requests or entreaties that he find a) a way for her to meet her love object or b) spirit him off in the TARDIS just for her.

The Doctor was faced with a totally lovesick companion. And he wasn't even the object of her affections!

A couple of days later, while the Doctor was looking through the TARDIS library shelves for a bit of reading (lately, he had developed a taste for, of all things, the works of one Mickey Spillane, who had specialized in the genre known as the 'hard-boiled private eye' thriller), Ace started the Doctor with a question.

"Professor, have you ever been in love?"

"Love...?" the surprised Doctor said. "Good heavens, Ace, I really can't say. Oh, possibly a few times...well, more than a few...you know what they say, 'Love is all a matter of...'"

"You know what I mean, Doctor," she snapped, a serious, intent look on her tomboyish features. "I mean **really** in love. Like you can't live without the person. That sort of stuff."

"Ah, you mean the thing that enables soap-opera writers to twang the heart-strings of their fans, scribblers of Harlequin Romances to set off the tear ducts and many a man and woman to delude themselves that..."

"Professor, that's positively cynical! That's not like you!"

"When you've lived as long as I have, my dear Ace," the Doctor said pontifically, "you build up a lot of wonder...and a lot of cynicism through experience."

"But you still didn't answer my question!"

The look on Ace's face told the Doctor that she intended to get an answer out of him one way or another.

With a sigh, the Doctor walked over to an old but comfortable-looking rocking chair and settled himself, his mischievous face now serious with a hint of sad memory.

As Ace plopped herself down on the floor, sure that the Doctor was going to finally answer her question, the Time Lord stared off into space for a moment as something long unthought of surfaced in his memory.

"Yes, I guess I have, Ace...a few times," he said quietly, gazing at the floor for a moment. "Maybe that's why I try not to let myself get involved very deeply with too many people." There was a sigh as he added, "Especially some of the ones who travel with me."

"You really want to know about a love that can hurt, don't you, Ace?" he inquired, looking into her eyes.

With a touch of sadness in his voice, the Doctor continued.

"Well, try a love that must be masked as affection, that of a friend or favorite uncle. A love for someone who endures the thoughtlessness of another and accepts it as her fate...And you can't help her. And in spite of what you try to do, never really...well, never mind."

"I knew someone like that. And of someone who felt that way about her. Oh yes. I knew them both very well..."

Her name was Shara. Of the thousand dreams. Of the thousand dances. Of the glowing darkness. Whose slender limbs and graceful body weaved webs of magic as she danced the seemingly endless number of dances she had learned, no one knew where. Whose smile of child-like delight as she moved to musicians' music, whose love of what she did seemed to cause a light to surround her, bringing illumination of the soul to the gloom of the tents or the taverns in which she plied her art.

Shara, whose body could make magic with her dances. Whose body could weave a spell of love.

But whose magic could not save the one she had given her heart to. One whom those who knew him swore would destroy her of the wondrous dances. For he was a wastrel, a user of women, whose features and lean, handsome person had gone from woman to woman, charming, corrupting and finally casting them aside when he had taken all that he had wanted from them, both in material job and in their love.

Who had somehow won the heart of the wild, elusive Shara, whose face and form had driven men to prostrate themselves before her with expressions and declarations of desire and love. With offers of whatever it would take to make her theirs. To enable them to sample her delights.

But it was the one called Jarak who had done what all before him had deemed impossible.

He had thrown his rope about Shara and snared her in its coils, making her his slave, bewitching her to the point where she gave him much of her earnings to him to use as he wished, waiting for his attentions like a dog awaits the kind word or gesture from its master.

Yet, somehow the magic that was hers had not dimmed. She still enchanted those who watched her dance.

She was never short of those who sought her favors privately. Yet she always returned to Jarak's quarters to sit at his feet. For such is the way of love without reason.

And it was agreed upon by those who knew Shara and looked upon her either as a sister or a hopeless love, that Jarak used her ill. To Jarak, all that mattered was his own pleasure and desires. Not a week would pass when one of those who cared for Shara would find her sitting in front of the door of Jarak's house, her many veils wrapped about her like a robe, a look of resigned knowledge on her face.

And when she would be asked **why** she abased herself so, she would smile in the way that had mesmerized those for whom she had danced and rely, "Because I am his woman. It is my destiny. It is my joy. It is my heart. I will be his until the end."

And then one night, after nearly a year's passage, one who had arrived some months before and had gained something of a reputation as a physician (and possibly a magician, for there were some who said that his tent was larger than it appeared on the outside and had many strange objects the like of which could only belong to a sorcerer), tried to ask her, as he had many times, why she endured the trials of her love for Jarak, who even as they spoke was with the newest addition to his 'harem' of mistresses, turning Shara into a virtual servant for his new 'love'.

As the young-yet-old man whom Shara looked upon as a beloved uncle or as a close friend and confidant (and who had yearned that she would look upon him in another, deeper way), in gentle, kind and loving words, tried to make her see what Jarak was doing to her, Shara had looked upon him and smiled a smile of sadness and resignation.

And her reply was ever the same as before. "Because I am his woman. It is my destiny. It is Allah's will."

But this time, even as she spoke, seated upon the floor of the tavern cubicle where she awaited the call that would begin her time of dancing, Shara was staring off into the darkness as if she could see a vision with its shadows.

And this time she added:

"But I feel that the end will come soon..."

And so it was, upon that very night, word was brought that the handsome Jarak had been found, stabbed many times in the street just outside his quarters. His latest mistress had been seen being led off by a man whom some had whispered was her husband, returned from a great journey. Others said that he was one who had sought vengeance upon Jarak for some misdeed or betrayal. While still others said that the stranger had coveted Jarak's latest conquest for his own and had taken what he had wanted in the manner of his kind.

Whomever he had been, the result was that he had brought judgement to Jarak the handsome.

With a cry like a frightened bird, Shara had stopped her dance and raced to Jarak's side. It is said that the scream she gave when she saw her beloved on his bed contained the anguish of an animal in pain and a sorrow beyond all measure.

Now she was like a mad thing, like an animal protecting its mate. Any attempt to move her from Jarak's side was met with a ferocity that caused even the stoutest or most cynical of hearts to back away.

Only the physician who was a beloved friend was allowed near.

But within two days' passage, even Shara knew that the end was near. Her sorrow was great. She cried, tearing her hair, racing about Jarak's quarters as if searching for something that would hold back the inevitable, her voice raised in entreaties to Death himself to spare the one she loved. Whom she could not live without.

And on this string of words, this declaration of her adoration of he who had used her for his delight and comfort, a strangeness happened.

For as Shara watched in amazement, awe and fear, the darkness seemed to stretch and flow and surround her on all sides until only she and the unconscious Jarak were all that existed.

Along with something else.

He was tall, draped in darkness, his face not quite visible. Yet even though she could not make out his features, Shara could see his eyes. Eyes that seemed to shine, that seemed to reach inside her and touch her soul. Eyes that were terrifying. That were sad. That were comforting.

And as she crouched by Jarak's body like a lioness protecting her cub, the figure said softly, "Do you know who I am?"

"Yes," she replied, baring her teeth in fear of loss and defiance of it. "I know who you are. You are he who walks the vastness; who walks the stars; who takes those he wishes from those who love them. Who..."

A dry, sad tone filled Shara's head as a soft voice said, "Do you truly love him that much, my child, that you would defy even me?"

"I would!" she cried, voice filled with the fear of what she was about to lose. "I would not know what to do without him! He is my life, my heart, my...my..."

"God?" the other said with a kindly, whispery laugh. "One who has used you as he has, who has flaunted his many women before you, used you as a plaything, lived off your earnings? And only thrown you a crumb of happiness when it suited him or when there was no other about to please him?"

"It was my destiny," Shara said, trying in some way to make her visitor understand. "One such as I...it is our role to be as servant to the one whom the fates pick for us! Without him, I am not whole!" she sobbed, her fears now releasing themselves.

"Child...Shara..." the figure whispered, reaching out a hand that was bone-white, yet warm and gentle as it touched her face. "I have watched and seen what you have endured at his whims. And even I have wept for you. I whom men look upon as a cold and heartless being. One who severs life as easily as a seamstress cuts a thread."

"You...you have wept for me?" Shara said in wonder.

"Yes," the visitor replied softly. "For I, too, have fallen under the spell of your magic. Your dancing, your smile, your open heart. Even your devotion to one such as he. One who has never truly loved or cared for you...Look before you."

And a bone-white hand passed before Shara, seeming to dispell a portion of the darkness. And before her eyes, she saw herself; her joy in her dancing, her love for Jarak...

As well as the haplessness and hopelessness of her devotion as well. And the end of all her pain in a light and a warmth that made her stare in wonder at the figure before her.

"You would spare him for me?"

"I would, for you, even though his time is truly ended. His life has caught up to him. But you must give me something in return for his life."

"Anything you ask," she breathed, her heart in her throat.

"Dance for me."

Many had been the time that Shara had danced for a private patron, but never had she danced as she did that night. While music filled her head at a gesture from the dark stranger, she stood before her visitor,



wearing the garments she had worn those days and nights of her vigil. Soiled and wrinkled, dirty and tattered from her outbursts of anguish, they covered her. Yet it was as if they were the finest of veils, the most magnificent of silks as Shara began to dance.

Through what remained of the night, she danced, unaware of time's passage as the darkness about her became all. As her audience of one became the focus of her grace, her passion, her movement.

Her will surrendered to the music in her mind, her arms moved with the grace of the wind, her body weaved its spell as Shara danced one dance after the other, her eyes locked on those of the figure in black.

And as she danced, she somehow began to see her visitor's heart. She saw the compassion that was hidden beneath his fearsome outer guise. The weariness of trackless time walking from one place to another. The loneliness of one shunned and feared. For Death has no friends.

And suddenly, she knew that 'the end' she had spoken of had come as she beheld something that no one who had looked upon the face of Death had ever seen before.

A single tear coursing down a bone-white cheek.

A cheek not on the face of the skull-like visage that identified Death. But one that belonged to the face of a man who was young, yet old. Handsome, yet homely. Who had seen more than many had ever seen or would see. Who had eased more suffering than any physician or holy man.

And who would continue his lonely passage until the end...

But there would never be an end.

"Oh, poor man!" Shara suddenly said, dropping to her knees before him, reaching out a hand to him. Reaching without fear. Only compassion. And the beginning of something else inside her.

"You have won, Shara," the visitor said, gesturing towards Jarak. "He will live, but he will only realize the waste of his life...his loss..if ever...when it is too late."

And having spoken, the figure in darkness stood, preparing to depart as he had come.

But as he began to fade into the shadows, Shara knew the way her path had changed. Knew where her true fate lay.

"Take me with you!" she cried suddenly, before realizing what she had asked. Then, remembering what she had seen and felt from this fearsome vision, she held out her hands to him imploringly.

"Take me with you to help ease your burden! To share your sorrow! Let me go with you so you will not be lonely."

No word passed from either as woman and spectre gazed upon each other and drew close. As lips met in a kiss between the living and the dead, arms of darkness enfolded Shara, who went limp within them, eyes closed, a smile of joy upon her lips.

It is said that those who passed by the home of Jarak the Handsome found him lying outside the door of his quarters in the street, awake and, for those who knew the grievous injuries he had been dealt, miraculously unhurt and well. There was nothing to indicate the wounds that had brought him to within Death's grasp.

But there was one who saw something that no one else saw before returning sadly to his tent, which some say disappeared into thin air with a strange noise like battle horns.

For the friend of Shara, who had cared for her in vain, who had asked her why she loved Jarak the Worthless, it was a sight that filled him with sorrow and with joy.

For he alone saw the two forms, almost as one, rising into the star-filled sky. One a figure draped in black, white face shrouded in darkness, holding in his arms the figure of Shara, who held him in return.

For a moment, as if she knew he had seen them, her face turned towards the one who had cared for her, and a smile of radiant happiness could be seen.

The happiness of one who had found what she had truly sought.

A love and devotion eternal.

**I GO TO MEET MY LOVER DEATH,
AND DEATH COMES TO MEET ME AS FAST.
AND ALL MY SORROWS ARE AS YESTERDAY...**

From the Wall

We still live
here
just beneath the surface
of the black wall,
we inhabit
these simple figures
laid side by side
in neatly incised
silent
rows
and rows,
in shallow trenches
each shaped to hold
each separate shape
spelling the long roll
graven
on the dark
polished stone,
giving you back
yourself
intricately scarred
by these our
memories
let into the rock
let into the torn earth;
come down
down
here below the surface
under
the green growing
the free air
and the sky
we lie
far away
far below
long ago
earth
admitted us;
long cold
to old loves
still
we have power
to trouble at least
your reflections
through these unbleeding gashes
on the impenetrable dark
mirror of this
black wall.
Mark
our
names.
We still live
here.

Liz Sharpe

UFFISH THOUGHTS!

Pat Dunn

Thanks so much for my contributor's copy of BANZINE! #1. I'm glad that little story finally found a home in your professional-looking fanzine. Emily Penfield's art set it off very well--my thanks to her, too.

I enjoyed the mixture of genres and fandoms, which was fairly well balanced. It was wonderful to see the Kill the Dead material from the ill-fated "Ghyste Mortua". "What Hours Were Thine and Mine" and "A Choice Cut of Fool" were my favorites among the serious B7 stories, while "Supper and Be Silent" takes the cake (so to speak) for the humorous entry. I'm a Vila Restal fan, nearly as much as an Avon one, and Kathy Hintze's story provided an excellent insight into the thief and his survival mechanism.

For the DW stories, Steven Veverka's serial "The Shadows of Time" seems to be off to a good start. He has the characters of the seven Doctors down well, and writes competent action-adventure. It will be interesting to see where he's going next with it. Eric's "Chasing Shadows" was familiar to me from It's Log, of course, but it was nice to see it here, with Leah Rosenthal's exciting art for it.

Of the BANZAI material, I liked "State of Siege" the best--probably because I'm so well-acquainted with your cast of Banzai Institute characters from the Corey Chronicles. Also, I like vampires--to a degree, that is.

For Kill the Dead, your story "The Competition" was great--captured the enigma of Dro and the recklessness of Myal and used them in an intriguing plot. Kim McCarthy's "Snowbank" was excellent, too, on a very similar theme. "Bust the Dead" was played for laughs, of course, and worked well enough. I especially enjoyed Parl Dro's raised eyebrow at the ghost trap!

Well, thanks once more, and the best of luck on BANZINE #2 and beyond!

So far as I know, Annie Wontham and I are the only ones to use any of the "Ghyste Mortua" material, and from the stuff I've seen firsthand and in her own zines, it's a terrible pity Deb decided against going on with it. It would have been a classic. On the other hand, it gave me some good material to publish...

Jackie Moleski

I thought I'd drop you a line telling you how much I enjoyed BANZINE. I liked all the BB stories, my favorite had to be "State of Siege". I enjoy a good hurt/comfort story and I love action and this story had plenty of both. I recognized Little Red.

I also liked "A Time to Grieve and a Time to Celebrate", for such a short story it established a tone quickly and established its goal. Oh, about both stories, am I correct in assuming that Xan was Buckaroo's arch-rival, who killed his wife, Peggy? I remember you mentioning something at Brits about Peggy.

I didn't read any of the Kill the Dead stories, a friend threatened me not to until I had read the book, especially "Bust the Dead". She did say that "Bust the Dead" was her favorite story in the zine.

I'm not very familiar with "The Shadow" but I liked "Chasing Shadows", especially the 30's atmosphere. The story was a really good read. And Leah's art is fantastic.

I really, really liked "Past Reality: The Shadows of Time", each form of the Doctor was completely in character. More Please! I also really liked the frontspiece art. The art on page 39 was also good, it captures movement and Davison well. I would really like to read more Sylvester McCoy stories. I just saw "Dragonfire" and I really liked it, and Ace has great potential as a companion.

"Supper and Be Silent" was wonderful, finally a parody universe fit to compete with Bizarro Seven, tho' I'm sure I will still want to read more of Leah and Annie's stories.

"A Choice Cut of Fool"; neat, neat story. At first, I was kinda bored with this since it seemed like a re-hash of "City...", but the monster, altho' not completely original, did provide for some excellent hurt/comfort and a glance into Avon's real character. It was also nice to see Cally actually being used effectively in a story.

Finally, Karen River's art for "State of Siege" was excellent. Boy, can that woman draw!

Overall, the zine was a really good read. Looking forward to issue number two. Sorry I took so long to LOC, I started reading right after Brits but I had to force myself to put down the zine for a few weeks while I was doing papers and taking exams and I didn't get back to it until Christmas break.

Regarding BANZAI Lore: yes, Hanoi Xan was responsible for the apparent death of Peggy Banzai. Confused? Lord, so are we--if you read the novelization (which is a PAIN to find!), you learn that certain facts came up after her death (from cyanide poisoning just after her marriage to Buckaroo), they exhumed the casket...and found it to be empty.

Marsha Twitty

DUM DUM DUM DUM! Comments on BANZINE!

1) "Chasing Shadows": Excellent, excellent! I have nothing but praise for this story. The Doctor, Sarah, and Cranston were handled true to form--I particularly enjoyed the scene where the Doctor fouls up Lamont's line about crime. I look forward to more stories concerning the Doctor & the Shadow.

2) "Past Reality": I liked this story because it had all of the Doctors' lives in it. The only thing I didn't like was that I didn't see ENOUGH of the Doctors. Of course, this is pure opinion, but it would have been nice to stay awhile with a Doctor and not be given a "whirlwind tour".

3) "A Choice Cut of Fool": A particularly sensitive story. I felt my heart going out to Vila (and he is actually my least favorite character--sorry, Vila, I don't want you panting at my door). Cally was particularly well handled in this story, arguing with Avon, seeing to Vila's care. I enjoyed Avon's sense of humor, especially at the end when he teased Vila about the parasite.

4) "Bust the Dead: One of the best Real Ghostbusters stories in a long time. It was so reminiscent of the first season of the TV show. The characters of Myal and Parl Dro are not familiar to me, but I enjoyed their bantering, and I particularly liked the interplay between Parl and Myal when they were competing for Janine's affections. I laughed at the end, when Myal asked for the fee for getting rid of the demons--he and Peter could be clones!

5) "Sacrifice": Hmmm? Would Avon really sacrifice his position on Liberator, even to get rid of Servalan? I wonder...

6) "The Last Regeneration" Oh, come on! The Doctor as Blake, regenerating as Avon? Get real! Willis was okay, though.

7) "After the Reunion": Not bad, not bad. I wonder how history would have been affected had Sarah told the Third Doctor about his death? This should be followed up! It could be interesting...

And now the art: Emily Penfield's opening page was spectacular! I loved the shocked expressions and the dialogue between the sixth Doctor and Peri. Leah Rosenthal's drawing of Sarah & the Doctor in "Chasing Shadows" was quite good. Maybe she could do caricatures of Doctor Who's characters, like she does with B7?

Well, I know the letter is long, but hopefully my criticisms will be taken to heart.

While I loved each and every story in BANZINE!, my favorite was "Bust the Dead" as well. I liked it so much I made Kim do a story for me that appears in this issue. Tain't RGB, mind you, but it's a hoot...

And any resemblance between Parl Dro/Myal Lemyal and Paul Darrow/Michael Keating is strictly coincidental. Just ask Tanith Lee...

Lisa Savignano

Hi! I just got BANZINE about 3 days ago and I've already read it 7 times. I really liked the Laura Virgil cover, even though I have to admit she does a better Avon than Buckaroo. Oh well, a nice cover nonetheless.

The inside front cover was even better--Emily Penfield has a nasty, wicked sense of humor. I loved it!

I also liked "Chasing Shadows". My dad saw Leah's picture, and I really had to threaten GBH (Grievous Bodily Harm) to get it back. Even then I had to put up with "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men?" announced every 5 minutes for the next 3 hours. I liked the story. Sarah is being Sarah and the Doctor is also being very doctorish, and of course he would get the saying wrong.

"Cleaning Up after Gilbert"--What can I say? It is my story and I loved Betty's art. She got Big Bear down to a "T" and I loved her Perfect Tommy. Yum! I really couldn't tell who the last drawing was for a while. I thought it was Maritta at first, and then I realized it was male and must be Baron Samedi. Good job!

"What Hours Were Thine and Mine"--Good. Very good, in fact except for one nit or two, which really didn't stare out at me. Extremely enjoyable story.

"You said it was an Emergency !" WICKED!

"Past Reality"--Since I never got to see the Seventh Doctor or Mel, I can't make any remarks on characterization. But I enjoyed all the other Doctors and I can't wait to see part 2.

"The Competition"---Very good! I always wondered what would happen if Parl himself ran into a ghost killer. Very effective use of tension, as I always wondered what would happen. Also, a nice ending to wrap it all up. This could have been published pro.

"A Time to Grieve and a Time to Celebrate"---EUNICE?! Aggh! What a name! But a well thought out story with good characterization.

"Supper and Be Silent"---"Waddles" Avon? HA HA HA HA AH....

"Snowbank"---Loved it! A reaffirmation of trust that had me smiling! Aw!

"A Choice Cut of Fool"---Let's do some Vila-bashing, shall we? Still, an interesting idea, sort of a psychic vampire that feeds on depression. Neat.

"Bust the Dead"---Funniest story in the entire zine. It's just like one of the animated shows. I bet this gives them an idea or two...

"State of Siege"---And now, on to Tommy-bashing. C'mon, Jeff, say it. You did it just because your wife likes him, am I getting warm? Nah, just kidding. I liked it. Every character got some attention (alas, poor Bird--We knew him not well) and a chance to shine. I liked Nightowl and Dallas' edition of "Brunswick Vice" and Mrs. Johnson's "Ballet w/Sword #1". Just how long will it take to rebuild, anyway? Also, putting "The Banzai Institute Song" after your story was sheer genius. It symbolizes their spirit which never dies, and made a fitting epilogue to all that had gone on.

"After the Reunion"---Good, but another nit, one I have to complain of. The Doctor got the Blue crystal from Metabelis in "The Green Death", at which point he hadn't even met Sarah. So this story could never have really been. If she had changed the reference, like "going to see an "K'arpo, an old friend" or some such, it would have been better. Otherwise fine, with the ending on a sad note, as we know the Fourth Doctor is also going to his death.

"Sacrifice"---Nice, with a very Avonish solution. Enjoyable reading.

"The Last Regeneration"---Nah!

IBC and Back Cover excellent as usual. "License to Steal" my favorite.

Not long after BANZINE came out, I went to a con where Leah had put the frontspiece to "Chasing Shadows" up for auction. It is now sitting right in front of the word processor, and gee does it look really nice there...

Mrs. Johnson's first name is Eunice, according to the Buckaroo Banzai Fan Club sponsored by 20th Century Fox. And you can safely assume that they got it from Earl Mac Rauch, who created the concept and characters of "Buckaroo Banzai". If anyone out there wants copies of the newsletters, drop me a line. But you can see why she prefers "Mrs. Johnson". In my personal universe, she'd prefer even more to be called "Mrs. Banzai", but that's another story...

I did not bash Tommy in "State of Siege" out of revenge. The whole thing started when I was plotting it out with The Redhead and casually mentioned that it might be fun to start off with putting him in intensive care. She got this odd gleam in her eyes, and started drooling profusely. These days she gets it whenever the words "Will Riker" are mentioned. Living with a hunt/comfort angst fiend is not an easy task, especially when you're a fanfic writer...

Roxie Ray

First off, let me congratulate you on a fine job in editing BANZINE! #1. I really enjoyed your zine. And your Kill the Dead story (even though I read it before I read the novel). And I liked the overall look of the zine--the artwork was very good (especially Leah Rosenthal's "Doctor, Sarah Jane, and the Shadow"). I also enjoyed the Banzai vampire story and the Vila story.

Roxie went on to ask if I'd be interested in a few of her filks, which appear in this issue. High praise always makes me willing to take a close look at submissions...

The following is extracted from "Another Zine on the Barby", from Notes from the Underground, Volume 5, issue 5, September 1990, by Dee Beetem, and I assume I have permission to print it, as she sent me two copies of it.

Dr. Who, Blakes 7, Buckaroo Banzai, Real Ghostbusters, Kill the Dead...what do these fandoms have in common? They have Jeff Morris and his two multimedia zines. NAUGHTY BITS is "adult", BANZINE isn't. Both zines have well-written stories, a couple of poems that I, a fan poemphobe, thought were pretty good, and excellent art (although not a lot of it). I particularly thought that BANZINE's B7 "James Bond" back cover was a gas--Vila Restal in "License to Steal".

KtD (BANZINE) These pieces were earmarked for the folded "Ghyste Mortua"; I'm glad Jeff published them. I liked Jeff's story "The Competition" although Parl Dro's emotions and motivations seemed somewhat unresolved at the end; I wish he'd included more explanation. Wigmore's "Bust the Dead" (the Ghostbusters meet the ghostkiller) was hilarious.

RGB: I first discovered the Real Ghostbusters in these zines--and almost immediately became a fanatic. (So it's all your fault, Jeff!) Fan fiction rises or falls on its dialogue, and Kim Wigmore's story was spot-on, both funny and true to the series.

BB: There are a number of Buckaroo Banzai stories in both zines, but I'm afraid they did not make me a Banzai fan. I've always felt that it's harder to write a good serious treatment of a satire than to do a send-up of a melodrama. (It is for me, anyway.) I liked the movie, but it had a particularly loony flavor that is very difficult to recapture. We know that Buckaroo has his moments of angst, but the earnestness of most fan stories seems to tone down the Hong Kong Cavaliers.

DW: I liked Hoffman's crossover "Chasing Shadows" (the 'nose' knows).

Jeff's a good editor; the stories (even the ones I didn't care for) are of high quality, and the reproduction and proofreading is consistently good (not a given in these degenerate days). If you are into even one or two of these fandoms, buy these zines.

Dee's comments on BUCKAROO BANZAI make sense if one considers the movie to be merely satire. There are many people out there in Banzai fandom, however, who see it with far greater vision and would vehemently disagree with her assessments. Different strokes and all that...

I welcome any LOC's on BANZINE #2, and plan on publishing a separate LOC in December 1991. If you're interested in a copy, please enclosed a SASE with your comments and I'll mail 'em to you. Remember, we writers and artists need feedback!

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When Janine Melnitz is discovered missing, the Ghostbusters are naturally concerned for their redhead receptionist. When her purse is found in a nearby subway station, with signs of a bloody struggle close by, they fear the worst has occurred. But none of them could possibly suspect what has actually happened to her.

For Janine is now a vampire, rising each night to drink the blood of mortals and avenge herself upon the muggers who had attacked her. But she is also drawn irresistably to Ghostbusters Central and her former employers—one in particular. Night by night, Peter, Winston, Ray and Egon watch in horror as Janine adjusts to her new life, growing more and more inhuman!

Can the Ghostbusters find a way to save Janine before her soul is forever corrupted? Does she even WANT to be saved? Who is watching every move that Venkman, Stantz, Zeddemore and Spengler make...and why?

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A BANDERSNATCH PRESS publication!

The zine your mother warned you about is back...

MORE NAUGHTY BITS!

Presenting the second issue of BANDERSNATCH PRESS's adult fanzine featuring stories from BLAKES 7, DOCTOR WHO, BUCKAROO BANZAI, STAR WARS, and THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS! Stories include:

TEMPORAL DISCORDANCE by Pat Nussman—Two B7 fans at a Chicago con exit an elevator and find themselves wondering "how much is that Alpha in the auction? The one with the leather and studs..."

TOWER PARADISE by Tom K. Giza—The Doctor and Mel return to Paradise Towers for a visit, and get caught in a battle between the Red and Blue Kangs to see who can out-"how-you-do" whom...and then there's Pex's twin brother....

HALLOWEEN STORY by Lisa Savignano—Romance and mystery surround the Banzai Institute's annual Halloween Party...

HI DIDDLE DEE DEE (A GIGGOLO'S THE LIFE FOR ME!) by Anne Collins Smith—Worf hasn't been getting any action, which puts the Enterprise crew in grave danger, so Picard sends him to the one place where there's something for everyone—the Intergalactic/Interdimensional Bordello!

SET UP by Ann Wortham & Leah Rosenthal—All I'm saying is that it's one of their twisted B7 stories...

CHILD OF THE NIGHT by Jeff Morris—The Fifth Doctor is transformed into a vampire...and searches desperately for a cure along with his two lovely, warm-blooded companions.

LANDSLIDE by Maggie Farmer—Avon's last night with Anna Grant.

THE SURVEY by Jeff Morris—The Fifth Doctor discovers to his horror what Nyssa's been doing with her spare time on the TARDIS!

UNEXPECTED DIVERSIONS by Lisa Conner—A more adult section of the "Eirwyn's Uncle" saga, where a chance "one time stand" for the Doctor forces him to discuss the facts of life to his young companion.

IN A LITTLE SPANISH TOWN by Eric Hoffman—An alternative ending to THE TWO DOCTORS, where Peri and Jamie go exploring...

WEDDING PRESENT by Lady Whorfin—Mrs. Johnson and the ladies of the Banzai Institute have had enough of Hanoi Xan and the World Crime League...

LESSONS by Lisa Savignano—Electric Blue discovers a few things about male/female relationships both first and second hand at the Banzai Institute.

SLIME AND THE RANI by Vivian Arha—Peri borrows a Gallifreyan aphrodisiac from the Rani's TARDIS "just to see what happens"...

Contributors include Karen River, Christopher Cook, Platypus, Melissa Mastoris, Julia Jay, Adrian Morgan, Precosia Von Drago, Nora Mai, "La Belle Femme", Jillian Courtenay, "Kandi", and Pacer McCoy. There'll also be a LOC column for comments on NAUGHTY BITS.

MORE NAUGHTY BITS runs about 160 pages and costs \$11.00, plus \$3.00 for first class postage & handling. Make check/money order out to JEFF MORRIS. YOU MUST INCLUDE A SIGNED STATEMENT THAT YOU ARE OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE WITH YOUR ORDER. Otherwise, you may find a crazed Great Dane panting at your door...

Send to: **MORE NAUGHTY BITS, 1614 Grant Road, Webster Groves, MO 63119.**

A BANDERSNATCH PRESS publication!

BANZINE!

BANDERSNATCH PRESS presents its 1990 FAN-Q award nominee for Best Multi-Media Fanzine, featuring the universes of BLAKES 7, DOCTOR WHO, BUCKAROO BANZAI, KILL THE DEAD, and THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS:

A CHOICE CUT OF FOOL by Kathy Hintze—Vila picks up a deadly souvenir from Keezarn that finds him rather appetizing...

AFTER THE REUNION-- by Patricia Dunn—A post-"Five Doctors" story finds Sarah with two unexpected guests—the Third and Fourth Doctor!

SUPPER AND BE SILENT-- by Julie Nowak—A "BLACK AND WHITE BLAKES" story where Avon is cured of his many allergies and decides to find out what he's missed out on all these years...

CLEANING UP AFTER GILBERT by Lisa Savignano—When Jamaica is hit by a hurricane, the Banzai Institute sends a relief team down to help out—trouble is, the black market got there first...

CHASING SHADOWS-- by Eric Hoffman—Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? No, no—*BESIDES* him! The Doctor is forced to "fill in" for a friend when Sarah Jane is kidnapped.

THE COMPETITION by Jeff Morris—A KILL THE DEAD story. Myal is invited to a large festival to compete for a prize. Once there, he and Parl Dro meet up with a stranger that could be the death of both of them...

SACRIFICE by William Ader—Cally is dying of a rare disease, and LIBERATOR must race against time to reach the only planet with a cure. But Servalan has taken control of the ship...

PAST REALITY by Steven Veverka—An unknown entity on the TARDIS is triggering the regeneration sequence for the Doctor—but in reverse! Can the Doctors and Mel stop the creature before it's too late?

STATE OF SIEGE by Jeff Morris—Hanoi Xan has had enough of Buckaroo Banzai and the Hong Kong Cavaliers...

WHAT HOURS WERE THINE AND MINE by Mary Jo Dolan—Blake is injured and separated from Avon during a "routine" meeting with a rebel cell, and is rescued by a girl who knows nothing of rebellions but plenty about survival...

THE LAST REGENERATION by C.K. Smith—The Doctor's final persona develops a decidedly different (but familiar) outlook on his remaining life...

BUST THE DEAD by Kim Wigmore—The Real Ghostbusters discover a bizarre musical instrument seething with paranormal energy—and find themselves tossed back in time to meet both the instrument's owner and his "ghostly" partner!

This issue also features work by "Stew", Jan Grokett, Jacqueline Taero, Kim McCarthy, Melissa Mastoris, Emily Penfield, Laura Virgil, Karen River, Julie Nowak, Chris Cook, Nora Mai, Cupernicus, Holly Hutchison, Adrian Morgan, Lisa Conner, Judith Boguslawski, Leah Rosenthal, Annita Smith, Donna Carroll, and Mark Sellmeyer.

BANZINE #1 costs \$11, plus \$3.00 for first class postage and handling. Please send a check/money order (no cash, please) payable to JEFF MORRIS to: **BANZINE, 1614 Grant Road, Webster Groves, MO 63119.**

A BANDERSNATCH PRESS publication!

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All members are entitled to free copies of the first two issues. Please indicate which issues you have *not* receive
_____ #1 (March 1990) _____ #2 (June 1990)

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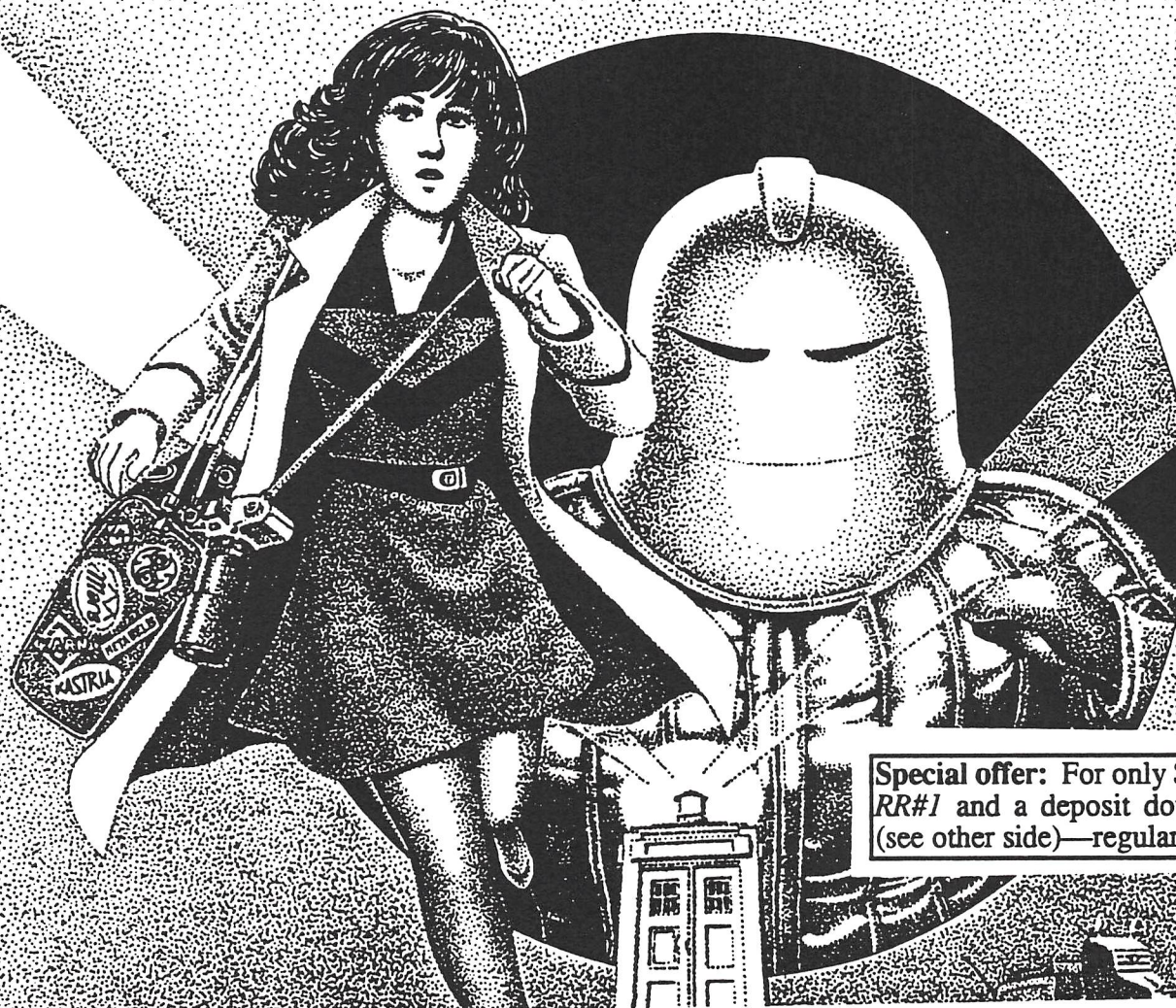
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ROVING

REPORTER



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SOUTHERN LIGHTS 5

BLAKES 7

"Madhouse Blues" by Kaye Dunham: A mission to rescue a rebel prisoner holds a few surprises for Avon's crew...

"Blakes Seven Get Smart With A Team Lost In Space" by Felis Sylvestris: What does it sound like? The ultimate B7 crossover, that's what!

"Nature of the Beast" by Kaye Dunham: Just what kind of animal would Avon be...? Servalan...? A mission gone wrong (of course) allows Scorpio's crew to find out!

Art by Leah Rosenthal & Theresa Buffalo.

SIMON & SIMON

"Be Mine to Guard" by Joan Enright: Rick relives some poignant moments and remembers how A.J. always gave him the strength to carry on...

MIAMI VICE

"Making It" by Liz Sharpe: Who is the mysterious prostitute Sonny picks up...?

"The Game -- By the Rules" by Linda Knights: A man from Castillo's past could be the end of Crockett...

Art by Adrian Morgan.

BLAKES 7/ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

"Seventh Sojourner" by Sue Wells & Dee Beeston: Gauda Prime has a lasting effect on Kerr Avon when he is catapulted into the past and ends up one of the "Merries"!

Art by Laura Virgil.

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD/PROFESSIONALS

"A Stitch in Time" by Sheila Paulson: Nasir isn't half as confused as Bodie and Doyle are!

Art by Barb Johnson. More ROBIN OF SHERWOOD from Jacqueline Taero.

PROFESSIONALS

"Fear of Flying" by Linda Terrell: Bodie thinks he must be seeing things...or could it possibly be true that Doyle and Peter Pan bear an amazing resemblance to each other...?

Art by Suzan Lovett.

DR. WHO

"The War Horse" by Linda Terrell: The Doctor and Leela meet up with a living legend...

Art by Maryann Jorgensen.

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

"Analysis of a Mission" by Linda Knights: Riker questions his command ability and Troi must help him come to terms...

More by Janet Walker. Art by Laura Virgil, Annita Smith and others.

BEAUTY & THE BEAST

"Origins" by Sheila Paulson: Where did Vincent really come from...?

More by Joan Enright. Art by Leah Rosenthal & Laura Virgil.

TOUR OF DUTY

"Sarge" by Joan Enright: After the war, Sergeant Anderson is driving a cab, but still teaching soldiers lessons...and learning from them.

STAR WARS

"The Man Who Could Be God" by Katrina Larkin: Han Solo wanted the ship more than anything...he even wanted it bad enough to work for the tall stranger with a mysterious past...

Art by Katrina Larkin. Also, "The Wolves of Metraccia" by Katrina Larkin.

More featuring STARKY & HUTCH, THE SANDBAGGERS, KILL THE DEAD and other fandoms. More submissions coveted, especially in the following fandoms (I've already got some fabulous artwork in these fandoms longing for stories to match!): THE EQUALIZER, MACGYVER, STARMAN, WAR OF THE WORLDS, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, THE MAN FROM UNCLE, BLACK ADDER, STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION. As always, I will consider stories from any and all fandoms! Artists needed for SIMON & SIMON and STARKY & HUTCH.

The zine is currently scheduled for a MediaWest 1990 debut. Be there!

To reserve, send \$5.00 + a long SASE to: Ann Wortham, 1402 Allison Ave., Altamonte Springs, Florida 32701. Please make all checks payable to Ann Wortham.

Issue #4 of SOUTHERN LIGHTS is still available in a reprint edition. This special reprint has the original full color covers and white GBC binding. It features MIAMI VICE, SIMON & SIMON, BLAKES 7, MAGNUM P.I., WIZARDS & WARRIORS, SILVERADO, BIG VALLEY, AIRWOLF, SCARECROW & MRS. KING, REMINGTON STEELE, THE DEVLIN CONNECTION, and others. Contributors include: Sheila Paulson, Linda Terrell, Linda Knights, Teresa Sarick, Marcia Brin, Jacqueline Taero, Kathy Hintze, Carol Mel Ambassador, Laura Virgil, Annita Smith, Jill Wells, Leah Rosenthal, Louann Qualls, Mysti Frank, Jeff Morris, L. A. Carr, Jocelyn Munro, Mary Robertson, Dani Lane, Theresa Buffaloe, Maryann Jorgensen, and others. \$21.00, postage included.



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Because you asked for it (when I thought you knew better--), Poncho Press is proud to announce the upcoming ~~escape~~ debut of THE BIZARRO COLORING ALBUM. This fanzine will feature dozens and dozens of illustrations from your favorite BIZARRO 7 stories, with almost no text to distract you. You can use them as pin-ups, or amuse yourself by creating color masterpieces, embroidery patterns or wrapping yesterday's fries. The zine will be spiral-bound for easy opening...and each and every one of the first hundred copies sold will come with your very own box of crayons! Such a deal! Plus, THE BIZARRO COLORING ALBUM will also feature brand-new art, created especially for this portfolio, with some of your BIZARRO favorites!

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ZINE SCENE

Ashton Press announces the birth of a brand new ad zine!!! Having trouble finding that great zine everyone seems to be talking about? Can't locate fanzines and merchandise related to your favorite fandom? Want to get to know other fans through the mail? Interested in submitting your artwork or prose but don't know where to send it? What you need is ZINE SCENE to answer all of your questions!

All you editors out there! Having trouble locating your market? Send me your ads! There are literally hundreds of fans desperately searching for you and your merchandise. Give them a central place to find you! Got t-shirts to sell? Buttons? Old zines? Anything at all fannish? Advertise all of them in ZINE SCENE!

All ads placed in ZINE SCENE are free and there is no limit to the number of ads you can place. Also, no limit on the fandom(s) which you may advertise!!! Any and all fandoms will happily be carried in ZINE SCENE.

ZINE SCENE's format will consist of the following departments:

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CONSUMER CORNER (All subscribers are invited to relate problems in obtaining zines, etc. Equal space will be given for replies.)

REVIEWS (Everyone is invited to submit reviews of zines. Printed reviews will earn a contributor's copy.)

CONVENTION CALENDAR (If you are running a con, please contact me with the details.)

The zine sections of ZINE SCENE will be organized by fandom (for example, all STAR WARS zines will be listed under a STAR WARS section) to make it that much easier to locate the fandom you are interested in! Multi-media zines will have their own section and there will also be a miscellaneous section for non-zine merchandise such as t-shirts, buttons, art, stationary, etc.

Once again, advertising space is free and there is no limit to the number of ads an editor may place. Please limit personal ads to one per issue. Please keep the length of your ads within reason. Make sure you send me a written ad, not a flyer. I will not write your ads for you from a flyer!!!

Deadline for submitting ad copy to the first issue of ZINE SCENE is April 15, 1991. If enough ads are received in time, the first issue will be available at MEDIAWEST CON '91. ZINE SCENE will be published quarterly thereafter. A definitive publication schedule will appear in the first issue.

If you are interested in subscribing to ZINE SCENE, please send a SASE for ordering instructions.

Send all ad copy and SASE's to: Ann Wortham, 1402 Allison Ave., Altamonte Springs, Florida 32701.

(The first 25 people to send me SASE's for ZINE SCENE will receive the first copy FREE!!!!)

SOUTHERN SEVEN 16

SOUTHERN SEVEN #6 has overflowed its boundaries and taken over SOUTHERN SEVEN #7! That's right, one zine has now become two, but you can still expect to see gobs and gobs of material from newcomers and old-timers alike in both upcoming issues. Look at the flip side for a preview of SOUTHERN SEVEN #7. In the meantime...

THE STAND by Katrina Larkin & Susanne Tilley: THE LOG OF THE HELLHOUND continues in BOOK VI as the crew of the Hellhound is trapped by Nik Theodorides' plan. While Avon's torture is physical, Blake's is psychological, and the latter's lack of leadership in a moment of crisis may doom them all. Meanwhile, their only hope of rescue, the ~~Snake in the Grass~~, has been reclaimed by her former owners...

PROPHECY by Janet Paderewski: Vila attempts to help Avon by taking his place on a mission...and ends up in a place from which he might not be able to return...

ELVIS IS EVERYWHERE! by Jeff & Mary Morris: Cally is bemused by the nocturnal changes in Avon, but she could grow to like them...

NAUGHTY GIRLS NEED LOVE TOO by Michele Lellouche: A little R&R goes awry for Blake and Avon when they run into Servalan...in the strangest place!

KNIGHT IN LEATHER ARMOR by Kathy Coy: This time everybody but Avon is in a coma...

FIREBREAK by K. D. Swan: Vila's method of dealing with Malodaar shocks even Avon...

DAYS IN THE DEATH by Shoshanna Green: Avon's scheme was perfect and brilliant...but he didn't count on Anna...

IT'S ALL DONE BY MAGIC by Linda Knights: A magician tells Blake more about his "past" than the rebel ever wanted to know...

SUBTERFUGE by Anne Collins Smith: Avon is captured and scheduled for interrogation...will Blake save him in time...?

OUT OF CONTROL by Jamie Ritchey: Vila discovers a secret on Xenon Base...a secret which could be the death of not only him, but Avon as well!

CHANGING STATIONS by Kaye Dunham: Avon and Vila with Will Robinson and the Robot?? Servalan with Dr. Smith?? Uh-oh!

AND THEN I CARE NOT by Jane Carnall: Avon killed a clone on Gauda Prime...and Blake considers it murder!

WALKABOUT by Shoshanna Green: A study of Soolin...

THE DESPERADOS by H. S. Levijoki: Gauda Prime was peopled with simple farmers...until Avon and the survivors of a desperate battle invade it...

NIGHTWOOD REST by Adrian Morgan & Brendan O'Cullane: A chance encounter could be the "death" of Parl Dro, not to mention Myal Lemyall!

HOMECOMING by Julie Nowak: Avon's been on the run so long that all he longs for is peace...

LETTERS OF COMMENT and THE FEDERATION SPACE ACADEMY FINAL EXAM!!!

Much more in the works.

Artwork by Leigh Motooka, Leah Rosenthal, Laura Virgil, Suzi Lovett, Theresa Buffaloe, Suzie Molnar, Mariann Howarth, Adrian Morgan, Gayle Feyrer, Maryann Jorgensen, Katrina Larkin, and others.

To reserve your copy of the zine, send \$5.00 + a long SASE to: Ann Wortham, 1402 Allison Ave., Altamonte Springs, Florida 32701.

Submissions are open for future issues of SOUTHERN SEVEN and BLAKES DOUBLES. Please allow a minimum of 6-8 weeks for replies and don't forget to include a SASE.

SOUTHERN STEVEN 7

SOUTHERN SEVEN #7 is chock-full of refugees from SOUTHERN SEVEN #6 and will, hopefully, be appearing at approximately the same time as issue #6. Here is a sampling of the stories already lined up for you in yet another "mega" issue of SOUTHERN SEVEN!

GHOSTS by Kristy Merrill: There's someone—or something—onboard the *Liberator* and it has already killed the crew of another ship...

THE STARBORN by Kaye Dunham: A mission gone wrong isn't the only problem facing the crew of the *Liberator* when Vila rescues a baby!

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GUILT by Linda Knights: In the wake of Gauda Prime, Avon confronts some hard truths about himself...

RICH MAN, POOR MAN, JOKER, THIEF by Barbara Tennison: Avon must come to terms with the fact that he is a thief living among criminals...

PROBABILITY FACTOR by Roberta Brown: Servalan's true origins are revealed and the *Liberator* is regained in quite an unusual, unique way!

YET ANOTHER GARDEN PARADISE by Shoshanna Green: The *Liberator* needs repairs but a trip to the planet Bailey's Seven to mine for crystals could prove fatal to Vila!

VILA RESTAL AND THE ENCHANTED DRAKE OF OZ by Dee Beetem & Margaret McNickle: Vila was just minding his own business when suddenly he found himself in a strange place where ducks talked and asked him to go on rescue missions...

THE INNOCENT by Karen Yost: Perhaps Avon didn't have a very happy childhood...that's okay, though, because a race of aliens is going to give him another chance!

RIPPLE EFFECT by Roberta Brown: Avon seemed to have inordinately had luck...was it just fate or something else more sinister...?

VAULT by Jennifer Smallwood: Vila Restal could never resist a challenge...but this vault could prove to be his undoing!

HISTORY WILL TEACH US NOTHING by Vickie McManus: A teleport malfunction lands Blake in a universe gone topsy-turvy...

WILDERNESS SOJOURN by Peggy Hartsook: A mission into the wilderness of Kenore goes awry when the "figurehead" Blake wants to return to his people balks at the notion...

FORGIVE ME ALL MY SINS by Robert Collins: It's a long time since Gauda Prime but Avon still remembers...and tries to forget...

HALLUCINATIONS by Nicole Petty & Michelle Moyer: Avon's "hallucination" tries to warn him of Gauda Prime but he pays no heed...

TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM by Sophia Mulvey: Cally was dead...or was she?

WHAT THE NIGHT CAN DO by April Giordano: Avon's companions send him to a doctor after Gauda Prime and learn a startling truth about the computer tech's true "nature."

A NEW BEGINNING by Mary Pat Cheney: Years after Gauda Prime, Avon reflects on the changes in government and his friends since Blake's rebellion began...

Artwork by Leigh Motooka, Leah Rosenthal, Laura Virgil, Suzan Lovett, Theresa Buffaloe, Suzie Molnar, Mariam Howarth, Adrian Morgan, Holly Hutchison, Judith Kitzes, Mary Gerstner, Kate Knepper, and others.

To reserve your copy of the zine, send \$5.00 + a long SASE to: Ann Wortham, 1402 Allison Ave., Altamonte Springs, Florida 32701.

The Black Scrolls Of Rassilon #1

published by Lloann'mhrael Press, PO Box 4334,
Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48106-4334, USA.

This zine features two stories set in alternate universes:

the game of deceit,

by Julie Jay:

" 'Come into the parlor, said the spider to the fly,' she mumbled, while dashing around the madly blinking console for the de-mat circuit. With a sickening lurch, the ship spun around, its momentum impacting her against the wall. Unheeded the neon bright console lights flicked out, and the time-rotor halted its labored oscillations, in response to its' hijacker's will. Moments later, the TARDIS doors swung open, flooding the silent room with sharp white light.

'Oh, my aching head.'" Moaning and squinting at the light, the Time Lady's jaw nearly unhinged, as a long scarlet robe with a fire-breathing dragon embroidered in precious jewels came into her line of vision..."

I won't forget you,

by Patience Sibeal:

"He had no choice but to respond. 'Your race is very interesting, but has remained primitive in some matters...and after the last couple of events, if we must return to Earth, I'd rather visit at a time which won't force me to remember a good reason for leaving Gallifrey in the first place.'

"Whatever that's supposed to mean," Jamie grumbled.

"You have to admit you Humans are quite unreasonable, overtly emotional, passionate, ruthless at times, and have an unfortunate habit of killing anything that is bizarre to you."

"I dinna kill Zoe, did I?"

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Samurai Errant

ISSUE FOUR

CAVALIER TALES QUIXOTIC AND PROFANE A BUCKAROO BANZAI FANZINE

Shanghai'd by Berkana — Perfect Tommy continues his crusade to keep Buckaroo looking presentable.

'But I couldn't help noticing your socks...'

The Missing Link by Stew — The trouble with a menage a trois is that there are three times as many things to go wrong...

Anyway, the way Rawhide felt right now, he'd probably wail it out like a sulky, snotty-nosed brat: He doesn't love me! Gatorbait by Shadowcat — Some of the Cavaliers try a vacation in Dumpwater, Louisiana and of course end up adventuring instead.

'Sounds great to me,' Buckaroo confirmed. — 'Absolutely not...' Tommy began. — *'GREAT! We'll be ready in the morning,' said Rawhide.*

Extracts from the Journal of a Lover by Berkana

July 16 — Met an entomologist I'll be working with. Tall, dark... Could prove to be rather a distraction.

'Find the Jetcar' said the President: A Buckaroo Banzai Thriller by Tim Howe — Part Four: the tragic conclusion to the BB epic. PLUS Tim's all new Banzai Saga — a fascinating history in comix. Eulogy by Arcane Annie — Pecos remembers and farewells Peggy.

If you knew her you'd have laid down your life for her. Death, Destruction and Criminal Devastation by Berkana — The Cavaliers are asked to investigate a chemical accident.

'What the hell does that mean — "more than decayed"?' Ladies' Night by Dreamspinner — Mrs Johnson helps Penny begin to feel at home at the Institute.

'Peggy was Miss Wonderful and I'm like something the cat dragged in,' Penny muttered to herself.

The Death of Innocence by Stew — Perfect Tommy reminds Reno of his promise to tell the tale of his second wife.

'OK, I'll tell you, as long as you're not a maudlin drunk.' The Bizarre Bazaar (or A Fete Worse Than Death) by Dreamspinner — The Institute's fund-raising efforts create a few problems...

'What monsters?' Buckaroo asked impatiently. — 'The purple ones hiding behind the Christmas Tree,' Pinky replied.

The Oddest Couple by Downtown — New Jersey reluctantly accompanies Reno to California.

It couldn't have been worse, even if it was Perfect Tommy.

All this plus 16 pages of controversial LoCs and glorious illustrations by Tim Howe, Steve Scholz, Shadowcat, Blades and Arcane Annie. Romance is both straight and slash, but there's nothing too offensively squidgy involved. Some copies of Issues One, Two and Three still available. Contributions welcome for Issue Five. All correspondence is welcome too! Write to your friendly editor today...

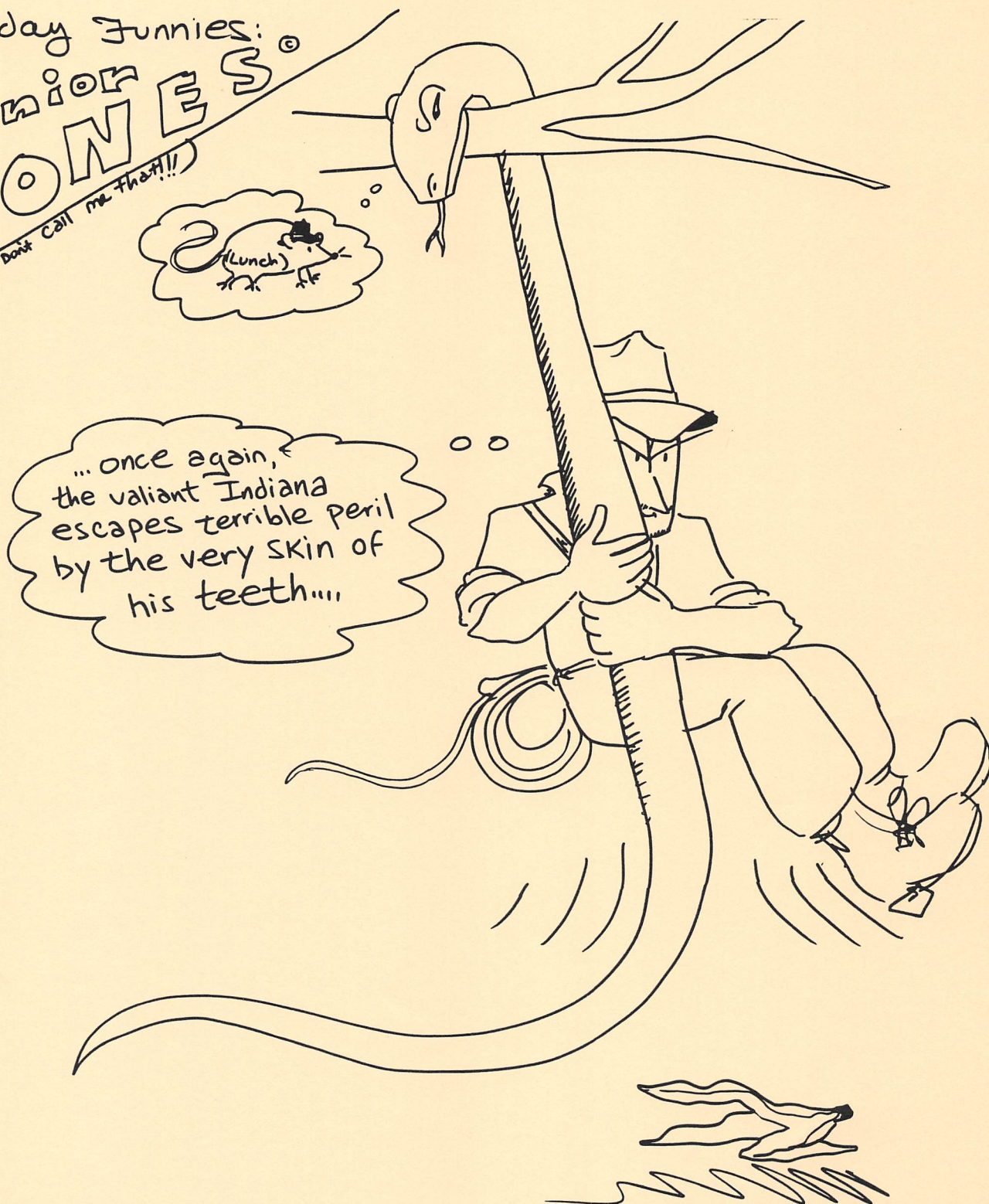
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いまポーラから“パラフェ・コレクション”一。□

Sunday Funnies:
JUNIOR JONES ©
(Don't call me that!!)



This piece by Leah Rosenthal was found hanging on an easel in the hotel lobby at the 1989 MEDIAWEST. It was drawn after a large con contingent had returned from a midnight showing of INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE. Sometime Sunday morning, the illo vanished under mysterious circumstances, and to this day no one knows who the perpetrator of this heinous crime was.

Until now.

